











# ROBERT GREATHOUSE.

## A Story of the Nevada Silver Mines.

By JOHN FRANKLIN SWIFT,

AUTHOR OF

"Going to Jericho; or, Sketches of Travel in Spain and the East."



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## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

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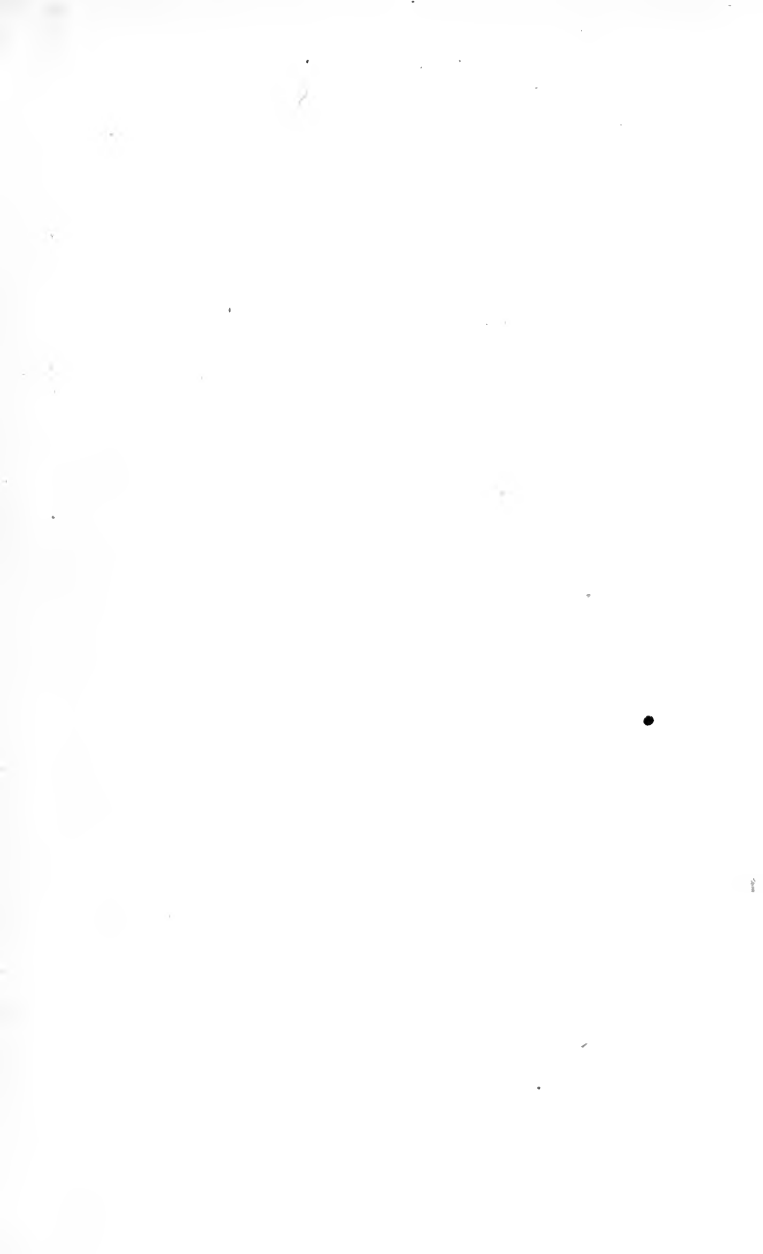
A SECOND edition of Robert Greathouse having been called for, the author avails himself of the opportunity to make some corrections in the plot, which he believes will not only add to the interest of the work, but render it more valuable as a picture of life and manners in California and Nevada (as the country formerly known as "Washoe" is now called).

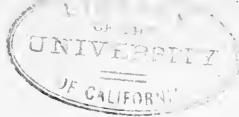
At the same time he ventures to assure the reader that, while the story, both as to character and incident, is wholly and entirely fictitious, yet it contains genuine descriptions of social and business characteristics—some good and commendable, and others that are only pointed out to be reprehended.

And herein the author especially refers to the vicious mode in which, in too many instances, mining properties have been, and still are, systematically mismanaged through the machinery of corporations and joint-stock companies, whereby the unsuspecting, and generally those least able to bear such losses, are often ruined.

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# ROBERT GREATHOUSE.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE SILVER MINES.

A MORE uninviting situation for the residence of human beings than the sides of Mount Davidson can scarcely be imagined. Standing in the midst of a country so destitute of moisture and fructifying soil that its very valleys are deserts, the mountain rears its black crest to a height of ten thousand feet above the sea level, and so looks down in grim majesty upon a scene of Plutonian desolation that lies on every side. Yet within two thousand feet of the summit of this barren rock stands the town of Virginia City, containing a population of twenty thousand souls, amongst whom exist a class of people as familiar with the refinements and usages of that which we in modern times are in the habit of calling good society, as can be found at least in any town of the same size in America.

The secret of such a city being situated in such a place lies not upon the surface of the earth, but is hidden from view. Along the whole face of the mountain from the north to the south, extending many miles in length and passing directly under the town, lies the vein of silver ore known as the Comstock Lode.

For miles along this vein, at intervals of a few hundred yards apart, the frail sheds covering the hoisting works, the smoking chimney, and the jet of steam, the great pile of white and gray stone and debris, mark the shafts of the various companies working the mine.

A wide thoroughfare, extending in a straight line from Virginia to Gold Hill, passes precisely in front of all the hoist-

ing works, and indicates pretty accurately the location of the argentiferous vein.

Along this road immense wagons, like huge houses on wheels, laden with bags of ore or many tons of loose silver-bearing rock, and drawn by troops of horses or mules, toil ponderously up and down, passing from the mine's mouth to distant crushing-mills, which may be seen spitting and fuming for miles and miles down the mountain-sides in every direction. These moving piles of rock are the only indications to the passing stranger of what is being done by busy thousands beneath his feet; for as he walks he passes over the heads of miners who are delving hundreds of yards below him in the earth, which has long since been honeycombed by their increasing industry.

The town of Virginia extends along this thoroughfare, and up and down the mountain, on either side of it, each street being a sort of terrace. At the time our story opens the splendid stone and brick warehouses, stores and hotels, which now ornament the town, were not in existence. Half the shops were still of wood, and tents and shanties covered the mountain-side in motley and promiscuous confusion.

In the commencement of cities in the mines of the great west it has always occurred that men's vices have been provided for as one of their earliest wants, and always in advance of anything like material comfort. Substantial grog-shops spring up long before the foundation of a dwelling-house can be laid.

San Francisco in her early days possessed splendid gambling-saloons before decent inns could be finished, and for years the comfort and even luxury of these hells rendered them the general lounging-place of men who would have blushed at the bare thought of participating in the disreputable amusement or calling of the gambler.

That which has existed and been suppressed by law in San Francisco sprang at once into active life and vigor in Virginia City, where as yet no law had been decreed.

The gambling-saloon, with its rich lights, comfortable seats, and tempting music, was the finest room and in the most central part of the town. But small and uncomfortable as were the houses, and dirty and unpaved as were the streets, Virginia City had already become an ambitious town, and her citizens talked gloriously of the future. Thousands of hopeful adventurers tramped up and down the one uneven street, discussing plans for the working of veins of ore already discovered, or

hopefully dreaming of lucky strikes to be made by fresh searchers. Already houses were being built of a more comfortable character, to which families were to be brought from California, or more distant parts.

In November, 1861, there stood a small two-story wooden house in the main street of Virginia. The lower or street-floor was used as a shop, while the upper part was occupied by a gentleman as lodgings.

It was after nightfall late in the dying year when we begin our story, and the evenings had grown steadily in length until now they were very long.

But this did not appear to be in the least to the disadvantage of the gambling-house across the street, for its blazing oil lamps, with bright plated reflectors, sent the light gleaming and flashing far out into the night, lighting up not only the gay saloon and the street in front, but darting its rays even through the upper-story windows of the little house opposite.

The cheerful light did not invade the chamber alone ; for with it came the click of the gambler's money, and the monotonous call of the croupiers as they invited the anxious crowd to join in the game, or announced its fickle results.

The front room into which the light from the gambling-house so boldly entered was plain in appearance, its walls being covered with cotton cloth, but furnished comfortably though rudely. A half-dozen strong arm-chairs of painted wood, each with a loose leather cushion, were ranged in an orderly manner against the wall. In the centre of the room stood a strong cedar table, covered with green cloth. Upon this were placed writing materials, and the ink-marks upon the wooden margin showed that this article of furniture was kept in constant use. Two lighted candles stood upon the table, and a man who was the sole occupant of the room sat in an office chair reading one of two letters which he had apparently just received ; for the envelope freshly torn was lying on the uncarpeted floor, while the other lay unopened before him. His head was large and handsome. His hair but slightly sprinkled with gray. His well-arched eyebrows were of the same color, and had already taken on that long, shaggy, and uneven look, that more conclusively than anything else in the features of a man stamps the fact that the fullness of maturity has been already reached. The clear blue eye, the aquiline nose and full double chin, shaven scrupulously clean, all contributed to the very pleasing and benevolent face of a gentleman of fifty years. His figure was in keeping with

his head. Commanding in height, and dressed with a degree of neatness that only the utmost care could maintain, the most casual glance was enough to reveal in Mr. Edmond Graham, for such was his name, all the outward indications of a thoroughly-educated and well-bred gentleman. He had finished reading his letters, and was in the act of refolding the last one, when the door opened, and a man, small in stature, of about five-and-thirty years of age, entered the room.

"Ah! is that you Bloodstone," said Mr. Graham. "I am glad you have come. I was about to go out in search of you. Take a chair."

All this was said in a tone of kindness and interest unmistakably sincere.

The man addressed as Bloodstone took the proffered chair and sat down awkwardly, and without removing his hat.

"The express has just arrived," said the new comer in a sharp and disagreeable voice. "Did you get any letters from the bay?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Graham, "I have, and it is about them that I wanted to see you. I have received one from my wife, and also one from Helen. Mrs. Graham insists more strongly than ever upon being with me, and will hear no objection; and now Helen has taken up the same side. She writes that her mother's health is being impaired by anxiety for my safety; that no discomfort or hardship which they may have to undergo in this wild place will be half as trying to her as the days and nights spent in fretting about our forced separation. Hitherto Helen, like an obedient daughter as she is, has been content to take my judgment as her own, and to urge my view of the case upon her mother; but now she asks me, for her mother's sake, to let her differ, and to urge by all means to let them come to me. They say they are ready to undergo anything—to be the servant of servants—anything, so that they may be by my side. What shall I do, Bloodstone?"

This Mr. Graham said with evident emotion, and stopping as if quite overcome by his feelings.

"Do," answered the other, but with no perceptible letting down of the sharp voice, "why, I'd let them come. I've always said so from the first. This is a good enough place for anybody, and certainly if it's good enough for you, it's good enough for your wife and daughter."

The high-pitched, sharp voice of Bloodstone seemed more unfitted to the subject and to the tone of Mr. Graham's mind

than even his flippant mode of treating it. This Bloodstone saw, rather than understood, by the change in the other's countenance, and he came to a momentary pause, as if abashed. Then he finished in a dogged tone, —

“It's a good enough country for me, anyhow.”

While Bloodstone was muttering over his last remark, Mr. Graham had risen from his chair and walked to the window, as if attracted by something occurring in the street.

“Look here, Bloodstone,” he cried, “and tell me if this is a pleasant place to bring a wife and daughter to live in.”

Bloodstone approached the window and looked. It was indeed a startling scene that met their eyes. The gambling-house which a few minutes before had been quietly pursuing its regular course of business, with no sound except the musical notes of the orchestra, the clink of the dropping coin, or the croupier's monotonous cry, was now the scene of a fearful tumult. Shouts of rage or fear from a hundred throats were mingled with the sharp crack of the pistol and the smashing of furniture. From the doors tumbled in tumultuous confusion a mob of frightened lookers-on, while the windows were being forced out by the blows of others who eagerly sought safety by jumping into the street, often carrying the sash and glass with them in the plunge. Above the heads of the struggling combatants, who still occupied the centre of the saloon, could be seen the waving of various weapons and the descent of blows, while another set of rioters, from the pure spirit of mischief, were seen breaking up the furniture of the house. These were hurling bottles and spittoons with great violence at the lamps, the mirrors, and the ranges of decanters on the shelves and counters. The malicious breakers of lamps, however, proved themselves to be the most effective guardians of the peace, for the saloon was soon in total darkness, and the scene of the tumult once more peaceful. The most desperate man will not fight without at least some semblance of light. Darkness favors retreat, for it withdraws from bravery its reward of glory.

The two gentlemen returned to their seats at the table, and Mr. Graham broke the silence.

“I must go to the bay to-morrow. I will see my wife and daughter, and if I can dissuade them from coming to this pandemonium, I will do so; but if I cannot, and my wife's health depends upon it, then there's no help for the matter; they must come. When will the new hotel be finished — have you heard?”

"Yes," answered the other, "it will be opened in three weeks."

"What sort of a place would that be to live in for a time?"

"Just the thing; it is to be conducted by Fogg, a well-known hotel man. And they say everything is to be carried on in first-rate style."

"Very well," said Mr. Graham, after a silence. "I will be gone about that long. You can speak for rooms for us, to be ready when the house opens. I may as well prepare for it, as they seem determined to come. What news do you bring from the mine? Do the prospects improve?"

✓ "Everything goes on favorably. We have struck some rock of a better character than hitherto; and Biggs, the assayer, says things look as well as we have any reason to expect."

Mr. Graham sighed.

"It is very strange that we do not find the vein. The companies working on each side of us have been hoisting out paying ore for months, while we, who were first upon the ground, and with the privilege of first selection, are still sinking down without reaching the lode. I fear, Bloodstone, that when I do reach the mine I shall be so deeply in debt to you and others, that I shall be ruined in spite of all. I am in danger of being wrecked in sight of port."

"Oh, no fear!" said Bloodstone, in the same high, harsh key. "While I have any money, we will keep on with the work. As for payment, everybody knows what the Comstock vein is; when once you strike it you will be out of debt, sir, directly."

Mr. Graham only shook his head.

At this moment the floor trembled, and the thin, papered boards of the partition wall shook, as some one was heard coming up the rickety wooden staircase three steps at a time. Directly the door flew open, and the person who had been dealing so recklessly with the staircase burst into the room much out of breath.

The new-comer was a young man of medium height, with light, curly hair and blue eyes. His dress was the ordinary one of the working-men of the mines, and consisted of a red miner's shirt, worn *a la* Garibaldi, with dark trousers tucked into the legs of a heavy pair of top-boots. His waist was girted with a lathered leather belt, sustaining a holster of the same material on the left hip, from which protruded the polished handle of a Colt's six-shooter. He walked to the table, and removing his

hat, bowed a good-evening to the gentlemen ; and then addressing Mr. Graham, said,—

“You told me a few evenings ago, Mr. Graham, that you expected to go the bay this week. It happens to be my turn to drive over in the morning, and I have saved the seat on the box with me, thinking that perhaps you would like to go along.”

“Thank you, Mr. Gowdy ; it was very kind of you to remember me. Pray take a seat,” and he drew up a chair by the table.

Gowdy, the stage driver, for that was his name and occupation, sat down.

Mr. Graham continued,—

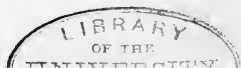
“You go by Nevada and Grass Valley, of course ?”

“No, sir. That’s just the point I wish to explain. I have left the Mountaineer Stage Company, and have joined the other line. So we go by the Placerville route.”

“Indeed,” said Mr. Graham, “that is something new. You know, Jack, that I always go with the Mountaineer line. How did you happen to leave their employment ?”

Jack twirled his hat in his hand for a moment as if in perplexity as to the place to begin, rather than from the want of an answer.

“Well, sir, you see there were a good many reasons why I quit that line. In the first place, the road by Placerville is a good half hour the shortest road to Sacramento ; and, if you will believe me, that half hour keeps a driver, who has any pride in his business, and has any reputation to maintain, on his metal all the time. Indeed, sir, if he is not wide awake he’ll be beaten every day of his life. Well, sir, you know me now well enough to know that I am a man that takes his coach to the end of the road as quick as the next man, or quits his box. Besides, the owners of the line were a mean set of skunks anyhow. That is, most of ’em are. Tom McSweeney, the president, that lives down the bay, minds his own business well enough, and the drivers has no particular cause to complain of him. But his brother Bill acts as a sort of a road-master ; and lately, as the company has been making a good deal of money and a little of it has been dribbling down to him, he has got to thinking that he is really as big a man as his brother. He’s getting the big so badly, that there’s no living with him at all. I promised him, some time ago, that if he come my way I’d take the starch out of him. So last week a Monday, as I went



over driving the 'Spread Eagle,' he come down the road in a two-horse buggy, and stopped against the bank for me to turn out for him. Well, sir, I don't turn out for nobody, except according to the regular rules of the road. I know my rights, and I don't turn out for old Abe Lincoln, unless its my place to do it, and then I turn for a John Chinaman if he is coming my way. Well, this time it wasn't my place to turn out; so I stopped, and waited for him to give the road. He soon saw that it was of no use, so he drove around. If he had gone on it would have been better for him; but he stopped, and called back to know that driver's name, so he could report him at the office. That was enough for me. I gave the lines to a gentleman that was riding on the box with me, and I walked back to the buggy, and I said to Bill McSweeney, 'Are you the chap that wants to know the name of the gentleman that drives that coach.'

"He said he was the same.

"'Well, then,' said I, 'his name is Jack Gowdy. Do you think you can remember it till you get home?'

"He said he thought he could.

"'Well,' said I, 'I am afraid you can't. You will get to thinking about your business affairs, and how you are going to invest the heap of money you are making out of these stages, and the name will slip from your mind and you'll forget it. I'll just impress it on your memory a little more forcibly. My name is John Gowdy, but most people call me Jack; and I drive the 'Spread Eagle' stage. So saying, I reached up and took him by the neck-tie, and, giving him a jerk, pulled him over the fore-wheel of his buggy into the road. He held on to the dash-board till it broke, and then he came to me; and when I got him there, I hammered him till I felt pretty sure that he would know me or my name either to the day of his death. I would have shut up both his eyes, but the road down is bad, and I was afraid he would drive over the bank. Such people are not worth killing, sir. I drove my coach over the road, and then left the company's service; and now I am with the 'Lightning Express' line, Placerville route, and expect my friends to go on riding in the coach that I drive."

"Well, Jack," said Mr. Graham, with a smile, "I suppose there is no help for it, so put down my name for to-morrow morning, and don't forget to call for me in time."

Jack rose to go, but Mr. Bloodstone detained him.

"What was the matter over at the gambling-saloon?" he



asked. "Just before you came in, there appeared to be a row of some sort."

"Oh, yes," he answered; "you saw the fun, did you?"

"Yes, we saw something of it. What was it about. Were you there?"

"Was I there? Well, I should say I was there, to the extent of getting a bullet through my hat," saying this, Jack showed his hat, which did have a clean, round hole through the rim, evidently freshly made. "I was there purely by accident, and had nothing to do with the difficulty," he continued. "The truth is that Bob Greathouse was at the bottom of the whole affair."

"He that is called Bob Greathouse, the murderer?" inquired Mr. Graham.

"Yes, the same. It appears that Bob discovered last night that the game dealt there was not a fair game of cards. They had a way of pulling two cards out of the box together. So Bob went there this evening prepared to put a stop to that sort of thing. He always carries his Derringer pistols, you know, ready cocked in the side pockets of his sack coat, so that he don't have to draw, but fires through the tails of his coat. It spoils his coats, but is a wonderful economy of time. The dealer got wind that something was wrong, and wouldn't play for Bob unless he would sit with his hands on the table—you see, sir, he knew Bob's ways. Bob agreed to that, but the moment he saw the trick played on him, as it was played he grabbed all the money in sight and commenced shooting. You know how quick Bob Greathouse can do that. He is the sprightliest man with a single-barrelled pistol in Washoe Territory. Of course there was an awful rush of the outsiders for the windows and doors. The head dealer tumbled over with a bullet in his shoulder, at the first shot, and two of the cappers were winged before they could get under the table. I took no interest in the skirmish myself, whatever, though Bob is a friend of mine. I didn't see anybody that I was particularly anxious to shoot at, so I flung a few bottles at the lamps, just to restore order, and when it was dark everybody left the place, and I went with them. That's the whole story. I don't think anybody was killed, and it's all over now."

Here the stage-driver rose to go.

"All right, Mr. Graham, you'll hear of me before five in the morning. Good-night, gentlemen."

"Good-night, Jack."

The door closed, and Mr. Graham and Enoch Bloodstone were left alone.

✓ "Bloodstone," said Mr. Graham after a short silence, "I have been absent from my family a long time, in the prosecution of this work, and now duty calls me to them. But I scarcely dare to go; it appears to me that I ought to be here. It is my continued disappointments that appear to enchain me to the spot. It does seem that fortune cannot always prove so cruel towards me. With the best prospects on the Comstock Lode, my claim is almost the only one that has yielded nothing. Can this continue?" He asked this question almost furiously, as if to say, "You shall answer me. I will not be longer denied the secrets of the earth."

"Mr. Graham," answered the other in his high, harsh key, "I have been your engineer and superintendent for a long time past, and ought to know something of the prospects of the mine. How hard I have worked to gain that knowledge, you know as well as everybody else. The work is being carried on with my capital alone. If I did not see a reasonable prospect of success, would I be likely to risk my own money in the mine? Does it appear probable that I would do so?"

"True, Bloodstone—you are right, and I ought to have more manhood. But it is the thought of my poor wife and Helen, that breaks me down."

He sat silent for a time, and then resumed,—

"I will go and bring them back with me. Perhaps they are right, after all; where I must be, there they ought to be. Attend close to the mine, Bloodstone, while I am gone, and let nothing be overlooked. Your own future, as well as mine, lies in finding the vein. Good-by."

They shook hands, and Enoch Bloodstone retired from the room.

## CHAPTER II.

## EDMOND GRAHAM, WIFE, AND DAUGHTER.

SEVEN years before the period when our story opens, Edmond Graham was still a country gentleman, residing upon an extensive estate in Pennsylvania, that had been in his family from the days of the Quaker founder of the colony. His lands were situated in Chester county, and his mansion was noted as the centre of a bountiful hospitality, that spread its kindly and civilizing influences over a wide district.

His fellow-citizens had evinced their knowledge of his sterling qualities by the bestowal upon him of more than one local office of trust, and culminating at last in the supreme honor of his representing the sovereignty of his State, by serving one term in the Federal Senate. But these public positions, as is generally the case in our country, resulted more to the honor than to the pecuniary advantage of the gentleman who held them. At the close of his senatorial term, Mr. Graham discovered that which a too close attention to public affairs had long concealed from him, that his private business had been badly, if not dishonestly mismanaged, and that his fortune had been almost entirely ruined. He found that the estates which had descended to him from his father free from debt or charge, were now encumbered with a mortgage to almost their full value, and that even the means of supporting his family in the liberal position to which they were accustomed, were no longer within his reach.

This was, to a high-spirited man who had up to the age of forty-three years pursued a successful and even brilliant career, a most trying position. But Edmond Graham was at bottom something more than a man of mere gentlemanly tastes and education. He had been taught from his earliest youth, and it had become a settled conviction, strong as his nature, that a life pursued in any path save that of honor could only result in bitter disappointment; that all seeming successes obtained by forgetting these principles are but apples of Sodom. To such a man there was but one course to pursue. His debts must

be paid at all sacrifices ; but this was not enough. His family estates, in his judgment, had been received by him from his father with the condition attached to them that they should go to his children as free as he had received them. He must release them from the charges that had been placed upon them by his improvidence or thoughtlessness.

A second term in the Senate was offered to him. This would have secured to him for several years a competency, but it would not pay his debts, and especially it would not enable him to clear his lands. He must therefore decline a re-election. More, he must withdraw himself from a historical position, from friendly association with the first men of the land ; must disconnect his name, already distinguished, from the great national measures that he and his party had undertaken to promote. In other countries Mr. Graham, according to the standard of a different system, might have been taken up and provided for with a place, — the governorship of a province, with a large salary. Even a substantial pension from the treasury at the end of such a career of national service, in England might not have offended public opinion. But in the United States, whether the policy be better or worse, it is a settled rule that the pay during the term of employment shall be deemed a complete discharge of the obligations due from the people to those who serve them ; and, whether the rule be a wise one or not, at least office is always accepted with a full knowledge of this principle.

Mr. Graham was not long in deliberation. Fortunately his wife was a lady worthy of such a husband. "We must at once break up our establishment at Washington," he said ; "our house in the city must be sold ; we must try to keep the family property, for it is our duty to do so. I hear marvellous accounts of the gold discoveries on the Pacific coast, and they appear in the main to be true. But the payment of our creditors is but one of our duties ; our children must be educated. I will discharge the one obligation, and you shall undertake the other. I will go to the new Eldorado. You shall find some quiet and pleasant educational place, where your support will be as light a tax upon our resources as possible, and with our daughter, wait till a better day comes to us."

To Mrs. Graham the task of duty was never a difficult task. It was the sole end of her life. A famous statesman of those days, and whose name has come down as a monument of history to our time, once said of this lady, —

"In the whole world, there never lived a more beautiful woman or diviner creature than Matilda Graham."

For such a woman to follow out such a scheme to its completion, was a thing that nothing short of death could prevent. It was part of her nature. It is needless to add, therefore; that no time was lost in carrying out this plan of retrenchment.

Mrs. Graham and her only daughter, Helen, then a bright child of twelve years old, were speedily settled at Wilmington, in Delaware, a beautiful and retired town, with an enlightened population, and where the limited means at Mr. Graham's command were found sufficient to ensure to his daughter the best opportunities of instruction.

To recount all the vicissitudes, the bright prospects, and bitter disappointments that fortune imposed upon Mr. Graham during the first five years of his struggles in California, would unnecessarily prolong this story. It is enough to say that the period of the silver discoveries in Washoe found him still ardently at work, but with little benefit as yet reaped from his exertions. The spur of duty acted upon his conscientious nature so as to supply the energy and vigor usually found only in youth, and among the very first of the explorers of the rich but rugged slopes of Mount Davidson he was found delving as hopefully as men thirty years his junior.

We have already explained the situation of the Comstock Lode. Crossing the face of the mountain from north to south, at a point within fifteen hundred feet from the summit, the vein of silver ore extends in a right line more than five miles in length. It is the custom of the American mines, for the discoverers and first settlers of a mining locality to hold a meeting, and to organize the district, as it is called. At these primitive conventions a code of rules is at once adopted, regulating the mode of taking up and holding mining ground. They limit the extent of each individual holding, and prescribe the amount of work that must be done to prevent a forfeiture of the right. These rules are recorded, and the courts which generally come after treat them in their decisions of mining cases as part of the law of the land.

The original discoverers of the Comstock Lode chose for themselves a tract of ground fourteen hundred feet in length, extending along the vein, with the right to run back into the hill an indefinite distance. This regulated the amount to be taken by others coming after them, and the ground for many

miles along the supposed vein was located in lots of fourteen hundred feet frontage each.

But when that which was then supposed, and which afterwards proved to be the true line of the vein, had all been taken up, other adventurers commenced laying claim to the land in front of the lode, lower down the mountain as well as behind it and higher up, so that in a few months the territory for twenty miles in every direction was covered with claims.

This was done with the not unreasonable hope that the vein might not follow a true line, but might break off, or change its course to some absolutely different quarter.

Mr. Graham, having had the good fortune to be amongst the earlier adventurers, had selected a claim upon the line of the vein between Cedar Hill, a spur of Mount Davidson, near the original point of discovery, and Gold Hill, a point two miles to the south, and where rich discoveries were made almost at the same time.

The fact that immense deposits of silver ore were known to exist at points on each side of Mr. Graham's claim rendered it exceedingly probable that a proper development of his ground would reward him with equally rich discoveries.

Upon the faith of these bright prospects, and very soon after he had commenced work, Mr. Graham had yielded to the entreaty of his wife, and consented to his family joining him at San Francisco.

They had been separated five years, and Mr. Graham found upon their arrival, that the child of twelve years, with whom he had parted at Wilmington, had grown to be a beautiful girl, just budding into womanhood.

The almost universal beauty of American girls is already too well known to require comment. It has been said, to their disparagement, that they are early to fade. This statement can also be safely left to take care of itself. Nothing we could say would alter the facts, whatever they may be, nor would it be likely to influence existing opinions, which at least ought to be based upon something more convincing than any individual testimony. A lady need not be entirely beautiful in face and form, to be very lovable. A full, bright eye, a smiling dimple, or a pouting lip, will often alone redeem a face from homeliness, and make a belle of an otherwise unpretending girl.

But the character of Helen Graham's beauty was so wonderful as to startle and almost amaze one who looked at her for the first time.

Though the beauty of American girls is often spoken of as something distinctive and national, we doubt if such be the fact. The collection of varying nationalities in our country has been too numerous to permit that, at least, in young women.

The beauty of Helen Graham was of a decided English type. Her height was above the medium ; in fact she was tall. Her eyes were, for a perfect blonde, unusual, for they were brown, and very wide apart, with graceful arches above them of the same color. Her chin was plump and oval, and passed to the throat and neck with a sweeping fulness that in time ensured it would be a double one ; but that, at the time of which we write, was still many years in the future. Her mouth was Cupid's own bow itself, which, when she smiled, opened just wide enough to show the tips of three pearly upper-teeth, of matchless perfection. Her neck was long, and her head set gracefully upon her shoulders, which were so sloping as to almost suggest their being too narrow. But it was her hair that most decidedly stamped the peculiar quality of the blonde upon her beauty. It was a rich, golden yellow, growing in unstinted profusion, long, fine, and with a natural wave running through it, that, when the light fell upon it, gave to its color a changeable character to darker or lighter shades. Her hands were smooth and graceful, her fingers regular and tapering. Her feet were not small ; they barely escaped the suspicion of being large ; they were long and narrow, and in perfect proportion with her height. The bearing of Helen was even more beautiful than her face and figure. Her education had been made as perfect as it was possible to do in the best schools of America, and her movements, as well in the presence of strangers as when alone with her own family, were all alike natural, easy, and graceful. The quality of her moral organization we shall not attempt to foreshadow, as the reader will have a full opportunity of studying her character as shown by her own conduct in the course of this story, and can form such conclusions as the facts may warrant.

The most pleasing circumstance to Mr. Graham, was the fact that his daughter had grown up to be the perfect image of her mother at the same age. Even now, the mother and daughter were so much alike as to be mistaken constantly for sisters. When the fond father looked upon her, he saw his early love reproduced precisely as he had known her twenty years before.

Any father would have hoped to find his daughter grown up to be a handsome young woman. Mr. Graham had reason to expect at least this result, but when hurrying from the mine to the city, he met her on the steamer's deck, and looked upon the noble, the queenly creature into which his little brown-eyed pet of five years ago had developed, it was with a feeling more nearly akin to alarm than pleasure. What can I do with this splendid being in this wild country? he mentally asked himself. And then he thought of the uncertainty and doubt that still hung over his prospects. Where should he place her? He had never until that moment realized the fulness of the responsibility resting upon him. Here he was engaged in a doubtful enterprise, in search of the precious metals that might or might not be hidden somewhere in the line of his excavations far down in the earth; with no friends save those made in the selfishness of trade, with no home other than some great American caravansary, the common home of himself and all the world besides, here was brought to him his only daughter, in appearance a beautiful woman, in years a nursling, a flower.

But there was no time for reflection. Mr. Graham did the best thing for his family that lay in his power; mortal could do no more. He settled them in a suite of apartments at the Cosmodental Hotel, trusting as trust he must that the sterling principles he knew so well were part of the nature of the mother, would watch over, protect, and guard the daughter.

✓ This done, and with many a silent prayer in favor of the loved ones addressed to Him that tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, and with many misgivings and doubts that would not be put down, the father returned to Virginia City to devote himself more industriously than ever to the early realization of his dream—to ravish from malignant fortune the means of placing his family in the position to which he felt they were entitled.

We shall not attempt to follow minutely the daily history of the Grahams during the two years that elapsed between the arrival of the mother and daughter from the East, and the period at which we open our story. It was without special incident. To the father it was time devoted to patient, self-imposed toil, made endurable only by the consciousness of duty faithfully performed. The life of the mother and daughter did not differ materially from that led by most families residing in hotels. But where it did differ it was invariably to the credit of their prudence and discretion.



Life in hotels in America is a natural and necessary consequence of the imperfect organization of a young community. It prevails more generally in the newer portions of the country, and disappears as society matures. It is seldom willingly adopted, and never save as a choice of evils. It will be seen that the Grahams submitted to this unpleasant mode of existence, understanding its faults, and with a determination to render them as harmless as possible. They kept themselves more than is usual within their own apartments, meeting the other residents in the house, as is the custom, at the table, but seldom elsewhere. They spent but little of their time in the public parlor, receiving such acquaintances or friends as circumstances threw in their way, invariably in their own private saloon. Such a course of conduct, it is true, brought upon them at times the ill-will of such envious or spiteful people as were for any reason more accessible in their habits. But Mrs. Graham always mildly parried the hints and insinuations of the dissatisfied ones by the reminder that her husband was absent. And in the broadest code of hotel life, this could not fail to be admitted as an unanswerably sufficient excuse. Even the original unpopularity brought upon her by what was charged at first as an aristocratic exclusiveness, in a few months passed away under a uniform gentleness of demeanor and decorous and kindly treatment of all, and those who by any chance fell within the charm of her presence went away lauding to the skies the affability and courtesy of the ladies who had become the pride and glory of the hotel. If Mr. Graham found that his prospects at the mine did not improve as time passed away, his burdens were at least not materially increased by the position or conduct of his family.

Each afternoon, as regularly as the express itself, came two letters to tell the anxious and toiling father of all that had happened in the rooms of the Cosmodental Hotel within the last twenty-four hours. Did they receive no matter how short a visit, it was recorded by two faithful scribes, with the minuteness of a pair of astronomers noting an eclipse, with its hours of commencement and termination, its incidents and its eccentricities set down for the loving eyes of the absent one.

Generally these daily chronicles of domestic history were so unimportant that the father saw in them only the connecting inspiration that annihilated space and joined their loving hearts, though many leagues apart. The facts recorded

would be forgotten as soon as read. Sometimes, however, a word or a line would appear that would cause Mr. Graham to start and turn back to read again. This was most likely to occur when a gentleman had called, as some did, though never unless formally introduced by some well-known and considerate friend. Fathers are always more jealous of those who would visit their daughters, than are mothers. Heaven has provided that women shall be the match-makers of the world, and who shall question the wisdom of its providence.

Towards the end of the year Mr. Graham began to notice the occurrence of a particular name. It appeared oftener than any other one name, and yet not very often at that. None but a father, and a very anxious father, would perhaps have observed the fact at all. But the name was a singular one to Mr. Graham. He was sure that he had never heard it before, and was equally sure that he did not like it. It was Bloodstone. He never saw the name in either of the daily letters without a disagreeable sensation seizing him just for the moment. "Bloodstone," he soliloquized with a shudder, "how can anybody be of this name of Bloodstone?" More than once he was on the point of writing to Matilda and to Helen to remonstrate with them upon the impropriety of having a person with such a name visit them, or even to speak to them. But a second thought always suggested the obvious injustice, and even the absurdity of objecting to a gentleman confessedly proper in all other respects, simply because he was called by a disagreeable name. Yet he could not escape, reason as he would, the inevitable sensation of horror that would glide along his nerves and creep through his marrow, when he would read the name of the new friend of his family.

Mr. Graham watched the letters that came to him daily, and weighed and analyzed them as carefully and noted the results as systematically as a meteorologist watches, and weighs, and notes, and analyzes, the action of the elements, one year with another, in working out his problems. He kept lists, and he knew accurately the rate of frequency of the visits of each male acquaintance, and their average duration. And it was not long before he discovered that the visits set opposite the name, Bloodstone, both in frequency and duration, exceeded that of any other name as the number of five is in excess of three.

About the same time, the letters from Matilda and Helen each separately suggested the same circumstance. They had

observed the phenomenon, and, it appeared, were no better pleased with it than was the father. This gentleman was well enough, they wrote. He was admitted to be a man of fortune and reputable enough, or at least came so recommended by reputable people. But neither mother nor daughter, and in this as in all things they agreed, could endure the man; his very presence was disagreeable; the reason why, they could not explain, unless it was his horrid name. They feared dear father would laugh at them, but Bloodstone was a horrid name, and made the chills run over them, so they wrote. They did not know how to be civil to him, and already feared that they had involuntarily given him cause of offence by their manner, though never intentionally.

A week or thereabouts elapsed, and the express brought not two, but four letters from the rooms at the Cosmodental. Two were written in the ordinary course of correspondence, and posted at three o'clock. The other two were mere notes, written hastily half an hour later. The horrid Bloodstone had proposed for the hand of Helen. Each writer closed with the same remark, "I always knew there was something bad about that Bloodstone." ✓

Mr. Graham walked up and down the room like a caged Bengal tiger.

"So did I," he muttered; "yes, so did I. How can a man be right when his name is Bloodstone?"

The next day came long letters with full details. The man had not proposed by word of mouth. He had declared his passion by means of a letter. The letter proved to be as extraordinary as the name and character of the man were unusual. The writer commenced by admitting that he had observed what he had but too good reason to believe was the evidence of a settled dislike on the part of both the ladies, but especially on the part of Miss Graham, towards himself, but that he loved her nevertheless. That he possessed a liberal fortune, and could if necessary produce evidence of the respectability of his origin and the purity of his life. That feeling that he had not made a favorable impression upon the object of his love, and to relieve her from the disagreeable necessity of personally rejecting him, he had resorted to the plan of addressing her in writing. That he now formally offered her his hand and fortune. But in the belief that at present Miss Graham's mind is prejudiced against him, and that she will decline the proposal, that he will so accept it without an answer on her part. But

he adds that he will take the liberty of making the offer a continuous one, to be kept open for her acceptance as long as she shall remain living and unmarried. And with the assurance that he shall devote the remainder of his life to overcoming the objections that lie between him and the possession of Miss Graham's hand, he subscribes himself her very obedient servant, Enoch Bloodstone.

This sketch of the note of proposal, the ladies followed by appealing to Mr. Graham for advice. The deliberation, the defiant, business-like coolness with which the matter was treated, seemed to fill them with a terror that was utterly unexplainable upon any reasonable grounds.

They appeared to dread some mysterious force quite outside of nature, that the incomprehensible Bloodstone might bring to bear upon Helen, and force her in some manner to marry him.

"What can he mean?" they asked.

"She never shall marry him," cried Matilda.

"I will die before I will marry him," echoed Helen.

But each assertion was made feebly, as if to conceal a latent doubt in poor Helen's powers of resistance against the supposed superhuman influence in the control of the fearful Bloodstone.

For many days the daily letters could speak of nothing but Bloodstone — his name, his proposal and subsequent conduct.

Yes, that was simple enough. He had not again made his appearance at the apartments of Mrs. Graham, nor did they hear him spoken of as being about the town. Natural delicacy forbade their making any inquiry, and at last they began to suspect that he had left the city. He appeared to have kept the secret of his offer of marriage as closely as Helen and her mother had done, for no hint of the matter was heard to drop from the lips of the most ardent lover of gossip. At last, there being absolutely no new phases to the affair, it gradually dropped out of the letters and ceased to be spoken of.

In the meantime, Mr. Graham was more and more deeply absorbed in the mine. Things went daily from bad to worse. All the resources in his possession at the time of the commencement of the work, had long since been swallowed up by the insatiable cavern that he was opening in the mountain-side, and for months he had been going on with the work wholly upon credit. Each day the vast ball of debt that he was rolling on before him, became larger and more difficult to move,

until now it threatened to overwhelm him in irretrievable ruin. It was about this period that he began to observe from time to time, a stranger standing about the doors of the hoisting works, and, at occasions, by the shaft's mouth.

Then he found the same person politely requesting permission to look at the mine.

Mr. Graham, in the integrity of his nature, had no secrets. If he had not found the vein while others all up and down the lode were doing so, it was in his judgment no disgrace, but simply his misfortune. The request was granted without hesitation. These visits were repeated from day to day, and the stranger's face became a familiar one.

In no long time Mr. Graham found himself almost every morning accidentally meeting and conversing with this stranger, who appeared intelligent enough and especially conversant with mining in all its branches, as well as engineering. Mr. Graham only observed that he did not like the sound of his voice; it seemed to be always pitched so high as to wholly lack sympathy. The maintaining of so high a key at all times made it disagreeably monotonous.

One evening, while sitting in his room engaged in working up the sum of his debts, and studying how to put off pay-day a little longer, there came a tap at his door.

"Come in," said Mr. Graham.

The door opened, and a gentleman entered. It was the stranger.

"Ah!" said Mr. Graham, kindly, "I am glad to see you; pray take a chair," at the same time pushing one toward him. "I suppose you have become lonely here among all these rushing, hurrying, digging, money-getters, and have come in to see a familiar face, and to converse half an hour. I am glad you have called. This is a dull place for a stranger, sir, and especially to one who has no interest in the mines."

The stranger accepted the chair with thanks, and sat down. His conversation, as usual, was intelligent enough, but Mr. Graham again observed the total lack of sympathy in his new acquaintance's voice. It was harsh and discordant. After a few minutes the stranger said, —

"Mr. Graham, you have been mistaken. I am not here for a social half-hour, as you supposed, but to talk with you about business."

The other turned and regarded the speaker with polite attention. "I am glad to see you," he said, "and I am glad to hear that you are doing well. I am glad to hear that you are doing well. I am glad to hear that you are doing well."

"Yes," continued the stranger, "upon business. Not upon my business entirely, but upon yours."

This time Mr. Graham's face assumed a look of deep attention.

"I have been here now for some time, Mr. Graham, looking at the various mines on the Comstock Lode. I have made a thorough examination of them all, from the mines that commence at Cedar Hill, to the other side of Gold Hill, and, sir, I find your mine the most promising of them all. I have heard of your troubles and financial difficulties, and believe you can be brought safely through them all. I am a thorough civil engineer, and understand mining in all its departments, as well as any man in this Territory, I am sure; besides, I have an independent fortune which I have made in the mines of California. I have come here to-night to place the whole of it at your disposition. I will manage your works and furnish the capital. Will you let me help you?"

The words of the stranger were words that again opened to the poor discouraged and ruined gentleman the vision of a paradise that he had dreamed over for years, but from which, of late, stern reality had shut him out. He almost forgot his instinctive dislike to the man's voice.

"Who makes me this noble offer?" he inquired after a moment's reflection.

The stranger for the first time hesitated, and his eyes fell. My name is Bloodstone, sir — Enoch Bloodstone.

At the mention of this name, Mr. Graham almost bounded from his chair, so suddenly did he start. He stood upon his feet a moment holding on to the side of the table, staring all the while at the stranger; then settling down slowly, he remained in silence for a time, as if recovering from a fatigue. At last he spoke.

"I have heard your name before, Mr. Bloodstone."

"I supposed you had, sir," said the other in his harsh, high key.

Another silence, during which it was evident Mr. Graham was making an effort to be calm.

"Is this offer contingent in any manner upon the present or future conduct of my daughter?"

This was said with a sternness of tone that approached severity.

"No, Mr. Graham, it is not the least in the world, and if you will allow me I will explain myself more fully. I met your uncle in San Francisco some months ago, and became deeply

in love with her. That I acknowledge ; how could I do otherwise? I saw that she did not return my love, nor was she likely to do so. I wrote her the letter which I presume you have seen, and have not approached her in any manner since. Mr. Graham, I still love your daughter, and always shall do so. I told her in my letter I should devote my life to removing her objections to me. It is for that reason, I confess, that I came hither. I make but one condition with you, Mr. Graham ; it is this — let me help you, and be with you. If, when you know me better, you find me to be a man of good character, of sufficient education to be mentally the equal of your daughter, that then you will not object to my seeking to win her. Even then, sir, I ask only that you will not oppose me, or force upon her any other love, to my exclusion.”

The offer was one which did not bind Mr. Graham to much. The complete rejection of Bloodstone, after all was done, was a contingency clearly provided for, should Helen remain obdurate. But it was evident that Mr. Bloodstone entered upon his Jacob-like service with the belief that it was amongst the reasonable probabilities that she might in the end accept him.

Mr. Graham saw in his heart that this could never be. The man's hard features, his unsympathetic voice, all told plainly that a woman of the delicate and sensitive nature of Helen Graham could never love him. All this Mr. Graham understood at a glance ; and so he hesitated. How can I, he thought, make use of such a man, upon such terms, when I feel morally convinced it must end in disappointment to him, sooner or later. He could not answer Bloodstone. He was too full of conflicting emotions.

“Come to me in the morning,” at last he said, “and I will give you my answer. I need time to reflect upon your strange, but, I must confess, generous offer.”

The struggle that must go on in the heart of an honest and proud gentleman, when called upon to decide on the one hand between the strict line of duty, leading to inevitable ruin and beggary, not only to himself, but to a beloved family, and, on the other, a slight departure from it, promising wealth and prosperity, is beyond the powers of human description.

It is certain that Mr. Graham ought to have declined the proposals of Enoch Bloodstone. His heart told him that Helen would never marry that man of her own free choice, and he knew equally well that he would never willingly use his parental authority to cause her to do so. But in the morning, when

Bloodstone came to Mr. Graham's office, he found him ready to accept the terms offered the night before. How he arrived at that conclusion I must leave to the reader's imagination. He may be able to find a better reason for his conduct than can the author. Enoch Bloodstone, when our story opens, had been both capitalist and engineer of the Graham mine for a twelve month ; but with apparently no better success than before his arrival. Day and night men were steamed up and down the shaft in great gangs, delving in the rock of Mount Davidson. Month after month passed away, and the furtive silver vein still kept its hiding-place. But the mine of Mr. Bloodstone's pocket held out as did his courage, and so the work went on.

For a long time Matilda had been pleading to be allowed to come to Virginia, to aid and encourage her husband. Her duty, she said, was by his side. This, Mr. Graham had opposed vehemently. His objection had been, so he said, the discomfort of the life they would have to lead. But in truth, at the bottom of it all, was the superintendent. He could not endure that Helen should be where that mysteriously disagreeable person could see her, much less speak to her. But at last Helen wrote that her mother's health was involved in the matter, and that the visit could no longer be safely put off.

The reception of this letter and its effect has been recounted in the first chapter.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### BOB GREATHOUSE, THE MURDERER.

It was a November morning, and the sun had already fallen into the sluggish habits of winter. Long before he arose, John Gowdy's coach had left Virginia far in the distance, and was whirling down the mountain-side, along the narrow grade, by the fuming furnaces of a hundred quartz mills, through the narrow pass of Devil's Gate, past Silver City, and when the drowsy passengers began to open their eyes and look about them, the panting mustangs were tugging at the coach, as it noiselessly floated, rather than rolled, through the sea of white



dust that, like a great heap of wood-ashes, covers the plains of Carson Valley.

A two hours' drive before daylight, on a sharp November morning, does not make men communicative. Not till the sun was high above the Humboldt Hills was the silence broken. The first to speak was the driver, who, seeing that though the outside passengers were all awake and looking about them, yet conversation had not commenced, politely introduced them to each other. Mr. Graham, who sat on the seat with the driver, was formally made acquainted with the two gentlemen on the back seat, and they with each other.

To the reader, who is familiar with the republican customs of the West, no explanation of this will be necessary. All passengers while in the stage-coach are upon a perfect social equality. If there be such a thing as a superior person in the company, that person is unquestionably the driver. The seat by his side is the most comfortable one, and the two behind him follow next in order. These places he generally manages to dispose of to the persons whom he considers to be of the most consequence, and thus finds himself the centre of an intelligent and obliged circle. It might be thought that a position of such power would render stage-drivers supercilious and overbearing towards those who are thrown temporarily into their care. I have not found it so. The newness of the American communities situated upon the Pacific coast, and their distance from the older settlements of the East, have kept back railways, and so given "staging," as it is called, an exceptional extent and importance.

The dangers attending the position of stage-driver have influenced strongly the characters of the men pursuing this calling. The roads through the mountains would not be deemed practicable in other countries. Most of them would be thought attended with no little risk, even as bridle-paths or mule-routes. They are often mere shelves, cut along the mountain-sides, not wide enough for two carriages to pass each other, with no thought of a curb or railing; and it is no unusual thing to see the coach thundering along one of these grades as fast as six horses can run, the wheel at all times within from one to four feet of the unprotected edge of a precipice, pitching off abruptly for one, in some instances two, thousand feet in depth.

But the roads are not the only perils of the California and Washoe stage-driver. He passes constantly through wild tracts of country inhabited alone by hostile tribes of savage Indians.

Against these, with no succor, save his own sturdy heart and strong arm, aided by his never-laid-aside six-shooter, — for his company is usually made up largely of non-combatants, women and children, or men of peaceful habits, fresh from less perilous fields, — the stage-driver must make his way from station to station, as best he can. To fail, is to perish miserably. He comes in "on time," if he is alive. If he does not report himself, there is nothing to do but to send another driver, and with him another stage-coach and horses and more passengers, for all of them are gone and will never be heard of again.

Such men as these, when on the box, surrounded by their little company of passengers, are not mere stage-drivers. They are gentlemen, soldiers, chieftains at the head of the cohorts, and the person who forgets or ignores this fact fails to render homage where it justly belongs. Surliness and impertinent familiarity are the two opposite vices into which, ordinarily, persons in similar employment are prone to drift. But these are the vices of menials, and Washoe stage-drivers are not menials. I have seen reserved stage-drivers, that chilled you with cold dignity; and, on the other hand, I have seen stage-drivers so affable as to at last tire you with their attentions. That, and nothing more. I have never met with an insolent stage-driver, or a stage-driver who did not consider that he held the position, and was expected to behave like a gentleman.

The names and faces of the passengers on the back seat were not new to Mr. Graham; but this was the first of anything like an actual acquaintance between them. The gentleman directly behind Mr. Graham proved to be Mr. Marvin Withergreen, of San Francisco, whither he was then journeying. Mr. Graham had long known of this gentleman as president and chief manager of the Pactolus Silver Mine. Of this mine he knew something, from the circumstance that it was adjoining his own, but not upon what was thought to be the line of the Comstock vein. It was one of the later locations, taken up, as we have already mentioned in another chapter, after the main lode was supposed to be covered, and in the hope of finding a break or change in its course.

Mr. Withergreen was understood to be a wealthy San-Francisco capitalist, who only came occasionally to Washoe, to look after his interests, which were not, it was said, confined solely to the Pactolus mine. Mr. Graham had not heard much of him, and that little, if he remembered rightly, was not wholly to his credit. Not that he remembered of any specific charge

being made against the gentleman, but rather vague hints that he possessed more boldness than principle, or something to that effect.

The other passenger was introduced to Mr. Graham, by the driver, as Colonel Greathouse; but the title alone was new to him. For it was no other than Bob Greathouse, of whom the reader will remember to have heard something in the first chapter, where he was the leader in the gambling-house fight therein described. "Bob Greathouse, the murderer," for by that startling title was he known throughout the Territory of Washoe, cannot be understood without a careful description. But of that description he was well worthy, for he faithfully represented, certainly a class, and almost a race of men once plenty, now passing rapidly away. The south-western desperado or border-ruffian will not be known to the next generation, except as a historical character. To this distinction Bob Greathouse had fought his way proudly and defiantly through unnumbered hand-to-hand combats, with equally desperate men, with pistol and with bowie-knife. To the title of "Greathouse, the murderer," he had waded through the blood of twenty, some even whispered thirty, not unworthy foes. Five had he slain, it was said, in California and Oregon alone. The statistics of his prowess in Washoe could not fail of being accurate. It was positively known to be seven during the brief period since the territorial occupation. The aggregate total of blood varied according to the uncertain and shifting data of legendary victories that floated hence from distant Texas.

It will no doubt be asked, why, when it was positively known that seven men had been slain by him in the very town of his residence, and within a period so recent it happened, that he was still at large and unpunished.

The answer is that the rule of municipal law had not yet begun. That the community was stronger than any individual member, and could have dealt with these acts in a summary way, is true. Lynch law is powerful, but it is seldom put in force except under excitement. It is only when the community feels itself menaced, that it will rise up and deal with the wrong-doer.

The men killed in these broils were the associates and fellows of the man-slayer. They were the same class of desperate men, often themselves murderers, for whom the community felt no sympathy. Quiet people, were generally glad to hear of one of them being killed, and only felt sorry that the fight had not been

productive of more bloody results. Simple theft in a new community is thought to be a more dangerous crime than manslaughter.

Had Bob Greathouse been detected in the act of stealing a mule or robbing a sluice-box, he would have been hanged by a jury of miners in two hours after detection with as little deliberation as he would have killed a man in a quarrel over a game of cards. But no man in the Territory, not even the Governor, would have been thought less likely to be guilty of such a crime than Bob Greathouse, the murderer. To cheat, to steal, to lie, these were the petty tricks of cowards and sneaks. Gentlemen could not stoop to such acts, and Bob Greathouse was, according to a standard of his own, a gentleman. It was certainly a strange standard that would extend this term to Greathouse, the man of blood, the gambler, whose whole life was a continual defiance of society, its laws and tribunals. But the standard seems only strange when contrasted with the notions of the times outside the circle that created and was governed by it. The south-western desperado does not after all differ very widely from the wandering knight of the fifteenth century. Bob Greathouse was as brave as the best of them. He was equally well skilled in the use of the arms of his time, and quite as prompt to use them. Honor, such as it was, according to his own rude notion, was to be preserved at all hazards. But he had fallen upon an utilitarian age, and he was useless.

There was a place, though a bad one, in the economy of the fifteenth century, for the knights-errant; and which place it is a growing opinion of our times, they by their faults created for themselves; but there was no place, or at best a very transient one, in the toiling, money-getting society of Washoe for Bob Greathouse. In the fifteenth century he would have been a soldier of fortune, a Luigi Sforza or a Braccio Fortebraccio, at the head of his free companions making his arm felt on one or the other side of every cause, boldly making war against monarchs, and hewing for himself a seat amongst the thrones of the earth.

Robert Greathouse was the natural and legitimate production of the system of African Slavery in America. His virtues were the virtues of a dominant and privileged class. His vices were the vices of the master of slaves, of the man educated in the belief that he rightfully held the power of ruling and controlling men as personal chattels—his failure and fall was inevitable when the foundation upon which these notions were based was

drawn from under him, as it was drawn from under him when from any reason he ceased to be the owner of slave property in sufficient amounts to guaranty to him a continuance of the lordly relationship, whether it proceeded from his own poverty or the total destruction of the system under which slaves were held—either cause was sufficient to ruin the individual. For the slave-owner like the slave is generally rendered by education unfit for any other condition than that in which his habits have been created and moulded into form; both are comparatively helpless when withdrawn and placed in a different condition—but the master is the greatest sufferer, and is usually more helpless than is the slave. The slave at least does not feel disgraced when compelled to labor. With the destruction of slavery, the class of which Robert Greathouse was a type will rapidly disappear. The generation now passing will see—perhaps has already seen—the last of them.

By nine o'clock the stage-coach was slowly toiling up the Sierra Nevada, and Mr. Graham was too much absorbed in contemplating the scene, to note the conversation that was going on around him.

The narrow grade, rudely and hastily dug out of the face of the mountain, was just wide enough to hold the stage-coach; places being prepared at convenient intervals for meeting and passing wagons. Looking up to the right, the eye followed an unbroken line of pine forest, as it mounted higher and higher, till the one of vegetation was passed, and then still mounting till the bold and barren rocks of the summit disappeared in the clouds. Huge boulders lay scattered loosely over the surface of the mountain-face, and with such faint hold upon the earth, that it seemed as if a breath of air would alone suffice to detach them and send them rolling and plunging down upon the frail wagon that was jolting along beneath.

Close to the narrow road immense pine-trees stood like giants breasting the onslaught of the rocks, and Mr. Graham could not help looking first at one and then at the other, as if to make a mental estimate of the opposing forces: could the protecting forest resist the threatened weight, and so let him pass safely on his journey? But he could not but feel that huge as was this line of sentinels, the rocks were so vast that once started on their downward career nothing could stop their irresistible progress but the valley on his left, two thousand feet below, where in fact lay already many a monster that had made the same victorious progress through or over the ranks of skir-

mishing pines. Down upon these, so abrupt was the mountain side and so narrow the road, Mr. Graham could from his seat on the driver's left have easily pitched a stick or a bit of stone.

Far off to the left, carpeted with everlasting verdure, through the centre of which its own clear and sparkling river like a silver film could be traced from end to end and set in the pine-clad Sierras as in a dark-green frame, Carson Valley was spread out like a splendid picture of *Salvator Rosa* lying on its back.

At last the summit was reached, and the view of the valley and the distant mountains was lost, the road plunging directly into the pine forest.

An active conversation was going on between Greathouse and the driver, with an occasional word from Mr. Withergreen. Mr. Graham, as we have before mentioned, had never met Greathouse until that morning, and was surprised to observe the quiet and gentle manner of the man, so strongly in contrast with his reputation, and especially with the title of odious distinction which had been added to his name. There was nothing of the nature of bluster about him. Every gesture, every word, seemed to imply a consciousness of a fund of irresistible strength behind, that could not fail of respect from all that were in his presence. And with good ground, for Bob Greathouse was physically as formidable as his name was awe-inspiring. Full six feet and three inches in stature, he was built in perfect proportion, and his long, elastic stride seemed to spurn the earth with the fulness of his power. He was dressed in a gray sack-coat with side pockets. His trowsers were tucked into his high boots, and his head was covered with the immense broad-brimmed hat so universally worn by Southerners of the period. Unlike most travellers in the mountain, he lacked the belt and six-shooter, so much in use. The stigma of murderer had been attached to his name by the public by common consent, but the expression was never used in his presence. Colonel Greathouse he was called by his friends, a title which he had gained on the borders of Texas, while in command of a regiment of rangers. He did not like, as can be easily imagined, the odious distinction that in Washoe had taken its place, and it was not thought to be wholly safe to refer to it within his hearing.

Withergreen had been conversing freely with him as they came towards the summit, until at last in a burst of familiarity he spoke in some manner of the addition to Greathouse's name.

"I have not heard you called colonel before," he said, "but by quite another title."

Greathouse understood the allusion, and his brow was clouded.

"I know, sir, what you mean. Some people call me Bob Greathouse, the murderer, but they are sneaks and mean Yankees that do it. Gentlemen give me my title that I have earned in the rangers. But even the Yankees don't call me that to my face."

This he said fiercely, but not loudly; the low notes of the human voice are always the most impressive.

Withergreen turned pale, and offered an apology.

"It is of no consequence," said Bob. "I do not find fault with you about it. You don't know me, and only speak what you have heard."

Then he went on in a quiet explanatory tone. "It is true I have killed some men in my life. One time or another I've killed a good many men, and I've been pretty nearly killed myself, not once, but a good many times. I was born a gentleman, and I shall die one, when I do die. But I'm not any more anxious to die just now than any other man. My father was a gentleman before me, but not a poor gentleman, as I am. He had everything that a gentleman wants, without having to stew, and fret, and fight his way along a God-forsaken country, filled with a nest of mean sneaks and Yankees, as this is. My father lived in Old Virginia. He had land, and horses, and dogs, and niggers, and he had plenty of them, and he had friends. Perhaps it would not be out of place to say that he had cards, for he certainly did have them. The land and niggers lie lost on the horses. Then he sold the horses for money, and lost the money on the cards. Then he lost the friends, but whether on the horses or on the cards I never exactly knew."

This Bob said with a grim smile, and he continued, —

"The dogs remained true to him — dogs always do — and he took them to Texas, and died as he had lived, a gentleman. He left me his principles of honor and fair dealing, and his arms to enforce them, and nothing else, for he had nothing else to leave. I came out here to try to get an honest living, and that's all I want. I'm no Yankee nor sneak, and so I can't trade, nor cheat, nor lie. I'm not a free nigger, nor poor white trash, but I'm a gentleman, and don't know how to work, and I'm not sure that I'd do it if I did know. I'm not a lawyer nor a doctor, for I was brought up in Texas, where there were no schools.

Besides, I was wild, and maybe I wouldn't have gone to them, if there had been any. Here is Jack Gowdy's business is an honorable calling, but I can't drive horses. I don't know how. Now, sir, what is there in this country for a gentleman to do?"

This he said raising his voice inquiringly, and looking alternately in the face of each of his listeners. No one answered, and he continued as if he did not expect it, —

"Nothing. There is nothing that he can do except play cards."

He paused for an instant as if to see whether that simple fact could be controverted, and finding, as he expected, that it was too self-evident to meet with doubt, he went on, —

"And that's what I do, gentlemen. I play cards for a living. When I lose I pay, and when I win I expect to be paid. It's not my fault if the mean sneaks and Yankees that govern this country won't let the law collect gambling debts. They make the law to suit themselves. It takes care of their interests. You owe one of them for a meal's vittuals, a bowie-knife, a pack of cards, or any other necessary article, and see how quick he'll have the sheriff after you, if you don't pay. But they'll let a man play poker with me all night and take my money while I lose, but if I happen to win a dollar, he'll snap his fingers in my face, and I may starve to death for all the good these Yankee courts will do me. Why, sir, when I first came to this country, I was on the South Fork of Feather River. One night I had a bad run of luck playing poker with a fellow of the name of Kentuck, and before morning I lost eighteen hundred dollars, and I did not have a cent to pay it with. Did I repudiate that debt?"

Here he again looked inquiringly into the face of each of the listeners, as if seeking for an answer. None came, and he went on, —

"No, I went to work in Kentuck's creek claim, with the water up to my waist, to work it out at five dollars a day. Was there any Yankee trick about that? They had a bankrupt law in California then, the same as they have here in Washoe now. And it was just as good for me as it was for the Yankee that made it. I had never done a day's work before in my life, and it was rough, I tell you."



## CHAPTER IV.

## THE COSMODENTAL HOTEL.

TWENTY-FOUR hours after the arrival of Jack Goudy's stage at Folsom, as detailed in the last chapter, three ladies were sitting in Mrs. Graham's parlor, at the Cosmodental Hotel in San Francisco. Two of them are already known to the reader; they were Matilda Graham, and Helen, her daughter. These two were sitting by the open window, impatiently awaiting the arrival of Mr. Graham from Sacramento. The third was endeavoring to temper their impatience, and to keep them company. She had dropped in from her own apartments in the same hotel, which were adjoining, and declared that she wanted to see the "Governor," for so she irreverently called him, as badly as either of the others, and that though she had never seen the old "covey," she would stay and get the first kiss if she could.

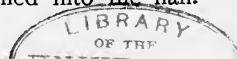
She was somewhat the senior of Helen, being at the time of which we write, about two-and-twenty. Her complexion was fair, approaching a blonde, but not quite up to the mark, with bright, sparkling, blue eyes, and a laughing, kissable mouth. Her figure was neither tall nor short, but compact and plump. In fine, Blanch McIver was as perfect a type of a pretty, charming, and lovable woman, as was Helen Graham of a beautiful, graceful, and elegant one.

"Oh! isn't it jolly," she cried; "the Governor is coming home. Here you have been for two years moping in the chimney-corner like a pair of superannuated nuns in a cloister, never stirring out, winter or summer, till poor Helen is getting to be as sallow and bilious as an old maid fed on vinegar and slate-pencils. She begins to look like a 'biled owl.' Won't I make you fly around when the old fellow gets home?"

"Blanche," said Helen, reprovingly, "how can you call my dear father such names?"

"Well, then, young fellow, if you like it better. But go out you must, now that he has come, if I die for it."

Just then a carriage drove up to the street door, and all the ladies jumped out of their seats, and rushed into the hall.



Here Matilda and Helen seeing the usual crowds of people lounging about the corridors and landings, stopped to wait decorously for the arrival of Mr. Graham. Not so Blanche, but, with a musical laugh, she sped along the hall and down the steps at the top of her speed. Half-way down the stairs she met a handsome, middle-aged gentleman, into whose arms she flew at a guess, covering his cheeks with kisses.

Fortunately it proved to be Mr. Graham, who, taken by surprise, imagined it was his daughter who had made this sudden attack upon him.

"It's not Helen," she shouted in great glee, "it's only I, Blanche; have you not heard of me, Blanche McIver?"

Mr. Graham had heard of her and corrected his mistake. At the top of the stairs he met Matilda and Helen, and pressed them to his heart. The mother strove hard to conceal her emotion, but long-continued struggles against a severe fate, with hope deferred, was beginning to wear upon her, and it was long after they reached the parlor before all of them together could subdue her hysterical sobs and restore her calmness.

"Oh, Edmund," she said, "you have been away so long — so long."

Blanche would have left them alone, for with all her wildness of spirit and love of fun, she possessed a pure and delicate nature, that would not permit her to intrude herself upon the family at such a time. But Helen would not let her go till she had been introduced and had got acquainted with her dear father.

"Oh, papa," she said, "Blanche is the dearest, the sweetest friend I have in the world. Without her true heart I do not know what we should have done during all your dreary, soul-wearying absence. She has been our friend, our counsellor, and our comforter. You must not judge her by her manner, dear father," so she said privately to him. "She is not frivolous, but is as true as truth itself. We all love her dearly, and wish you to love her as much as we do. You will, will you not?"

Mr. Graham was sure he would, and as she rose to go, bade her kindly good-night.

Helen went with her to her own parlor-door, and Mr. Graham, as he looked after them, walking in the hall, with their arms about each other's waists, and saw the commanding height and splendid beauty of his daughter, again felt the old feeling

of dread coming over him, as to the future of his precious but dangerously beautiful child.

Mr. Graham had known of Helen's friendship for Miss McIver from its commencement, in common with all the acquaintances formed by his wife and daughter. He now learned all that was necessary to know of her and her family. Her father, Colonel McIver, was an officer in the army, a gentleman of superior education, possessing elegant manners and polished bearing. Mrs. McIver was a lady worthy in all respects of such a union. They had lived in San Francisco since its earliest settlement by the Americans, and consequently from a time when Blanche, their only child, was an infant. This young lady had therefore been brought up in the metropolis of the Pacific. The only daughter of such parents, it is needless to say that every opportunity for instruction that money could command, or the country afford, was lavished upon her. These opportunities were not wasted upon Blanche, but were as seed scattered upon a fruitful soil, and at the time when our story commences, she was one of the most thoroughly accomplished young ladies in a city that has no lack of intelligence and refinement.

But the first years of her youth had been spent in San Francisco, at a time when it was growing up, and especially at a period when the male population outnumbered the female. As a consequence, the few ladies of beauty and culture in the young city were more observed and received more attention from the resident citizens than would have occurred under other circumstances. From her earliest youth, the beauty and vivacious temper of little Blanche had attracted the notice of residents of the town, and she became a universal and extraordinary favorite with all classes of people. This constant ovation naturally, in time, had its effect upon Blanche's manner, and at eighteen she was, as might have been expected, an odd mixture of the elegant and polished lady, and the fast, or at times almost flashing girl of the period, either of which characters she played with equal ease, shifting from one to the other at pleasure.

At about that age she was taken abroad, visiting the principal capitals of Europe, and was presented at most of the foreign courts. It is needless to say that she created a sensation. She spoke most modern languages with perfect familiarity. Her beauty, her wit, and especially her brilliant repartee, to say nothing of a reputation for the possession of a consider-

able fortune, made her always the centre of an admiring, if not astonished, circle.

"*La belle Americaine*" was the admiration of the salons of Paris, and for more than one winter was a brilliant star in the bright firmament of the Palais des Tuileries, and the envy of many a proud beauty, who was not content to surpass her in conventional rank alone.

At the time the Grahams took up their residence at the Cosmodental Hotel, Blanche had just returned from Europe. Her father had settled his family in rooms upon the same floor, and adjoining those of Matilda and Helen. It is unnecessary to relate how an acquaintance sprung up between two young girls so situated, and how that ripened into an enduring friendship. It would only have been strange had it not occurred. Mr. Graham soon saw that the fears of Blanche for her mother's health had not been unfounded. Long-continued confinement within doors, that fearful vice of American hotel-life, together with constant anxiety, had already made sad inroads on the health of Matilda. But now that was all past and gone. She would return to the mountains of Washoe with him. She would see her idol every day. The mountain air would restore her. She counted the days and the hours that still lay between her and her new home. The hotel at Virginia City, in which rooms had been engaged, was not completed, and three weeks must elapse before they could go. So there was nothing to do but wait, a hard thing for Mr. Graham to do, for his heart was in the mine, and he wanted to be with it.

But Blanche McIver, who spent more time in the Grahams' apartments than in her own, undertook to make him forget the time. She would tell him all the scandal of the hotel, she said, and that would be enough, if he attended to it, to occupy his mind for three years, if he wanted to stay so long. First she would tell him the history of the people in the house.

"Come out in the hall," she said, "and I'll commence with a preliminary lesson in geography, history, and biography as a foundation."

This was a few mornings after Mr. Graham's arrival from Washoe. The apartments next to her father's, she proceeded to inform him, No. 54, were occupied by the Gudgeon family, consisting of Ebenezer Gudgeon and wife, and a grown-up son, rejoicing in the historical name of Vanderbilt. The Gudgeons were originally from a city upon the Atlantic sea-board, where old Gudgeon, failing in some sort of small trade, flanked his

creditors, and got away to California. Here he had made a fortune, had been to Paris, had lived at the Grand Hotel, driven a Remise carriage in the "Bois de Boulogne," and was now back at his old quarters at the Cosmodental, retrenching for a time, preparatory to a fresh flight abroad.

The son, Vanderbilt, she assured Mr. Graham, was the most hateful, disagreeable, odious, disgusting flunkey that had ever stared a lady out of countenance. Most people, she said, had wholly failed to make out which of the two was the most hateful and vulgar — the father or the son. For her part, she had no difficulty in deciding that it was the son, for whatever fault Ebenezer Gudgeon, the father, possessed, at least he was not engaged to be married to her, and his son was. It was that disgusting fact that constituted the difference, and decided her opinion. Mr. Graham was amazed at this statement of Blanche.

"Ah!" she cried, "it's all the doings of that odious old Gudgeon. He is dying to marry his son to some girl with a fortune, so that he will not have him to support, and the gifted youth is as anxious as his father. They have persuaded my father and mother around to their side, and I gave my consent to keep peace in the family.

"The room next to Gudgeon's, is occupied by a new comer, a Mr. Henry Stacey, who comes well introduced from Ohio, and is to make his home with us. I am a little afraid of him, he is so good-looking. I fear that he is almost too handsome to be of much force. Still, time will tell. He is a lawyer, and if he does not prove to be too honest — (here Blanche assumed a tone of irony) — he may succeed. I have already introduced him to Helen, who, poor soul, would stay in the house a century without an acquaintance if left to herself. Mr. Stacey is timid at all times — a bad quality for a lawyer — and is especially shy of the ladies. He don't come about our rooms as often as we would really be willing to see him, for his bashful good-sense is at times a wonderful relief after the surfeit of brazen chaff and twaddle that is showered upon us by the fashionable mutton-heads that hang about the hotel. I sometimes think that he admires her, but girls, you know, are always imagining some such thing as that."

While Blanche was still speaking, a young gentleman of apparently three-and-twenty, came around the corner from the landing-place, and walked hastily along the hall towards them.

"Speak of the devil," she whispered; "here he is now. Good-morning, Mr. Stacey; how do you do?"

"This is Mr. Graham, the father of our dear Helen. You must know each other."

The gentlemen shook hands cordially. The young one stammered something about the pleasure he felt in meeting Miss Graham's father, but it was not very clearly made out.

The door of Mr. Graham's apartment had stood open all the time that Blanche was instructing him in the geography and history of the hotel.

"Come in, Mr. Stacey, and sit down," he said, at the same time taking Blanche's hand and drawing her with him. They walked in and took seats. The ladies were in their bed-rooms, but Matilda, hearing the conversation, came in, and seeing who was present, called Helen. "Good-morning, Mr. Stacey," she said, with a smile, and an easy and graceful inclination.

Mr. Graham was jealously watching the interview. He had not forgotten the remark Blanche had let fall about his supposed admiration for Helen. He was not more suspicious than are all fathers, or perhaps, even men who are not fathers. This was a man who was addressing his daughter, and that was enough to excite a certain degree of hostility. The first meeting of men in the presence of woman is always a hostile one. As two bulls in a field commence to roar and paw the earth at first sight of each other, so would gentlemen do but for the humanizing influence of civilization. Let them bow and smile as much as they will, in their hearts they hate each other. This is the remains of the old savage still left in us. As young setters, the most civilized of dogs, in their first year carry away and bury in the ground all the bones and old boots and bits of leather they can find, the result of a not-wholly-forgotten instinct of saving against a rainy day, transmitted to them from their wolfish progenitors, and in spite of centuries of skilful training and cross-breeding, so does the male of the human species feel the old savage stir in him at the sight of a man whom he suspects to be looking, with no matter how innocent an admiration, at his women.

But Mr. Graham, look as sharply as he would, could find no fault with the conduct of either party this time. Helen's manner was simply that of the thoroughly refined and modest lady, who meets a gentleman of good position and breeding. She was kind and even cordial. Mr. Stacey's manner was natural, and therefore difficult to fathom. It was consistent with almost any theory.

The suspicion that Blanche had let drop, that Mr. Stacey ad-

mired Helen, had put Mr. Graham on the watch. While he was still thinking of it, a bell-boy came in with a card.

"Show the gentleman in," said Matilda, after reading the name.

In another moment the door again opened, and a fashionably-dressed young gentleman entered the room. He was about twenty-five years old, of good carriage, and saving that his face was shaved in such a manner as to leave no beard excepting only a heavy brown moustache, the weight of which pulled it down quite below the chin, together with a long goatee or imperial of the same dull color, imparting to the features a heavy, sinister expression, Vanderbilt Gudgeon would have passed anywhere for a very handsome young gentleman.

"*Voilà ma bête noire*," whispered Blanche to Helen.

The young gentleman was introduced to Helen's father, and took a seat, hat in hand. He had called to ask the ladies to take part in a visit to the Cliff House and the Ocean Beach, which was arranged, he said, for the following day. A ship had been wrecked on the shore the day before, and was now being broken up by the surf. Would Mr. Graham go? and would the ladies go as well?

Mr. Graham, after a moment's consultation, signified that they would be happy to take part in the excursion.

Mr. Stacey had not been invited, nor, indeed, had he been scarcely so much as spoken to by the young gentleman, who having finished his visit was on the point of leaving.

Turning to Blanche as if he had just thought of it, he said, — "Oh, of course you'll go."

"Of course I won't go," she answered sharply.

"Blanche," cried Helen, "you must go. I would not have promised had I not expected you to be of the party."

All the Grahams joined in the prayer to the young lady; but no, she would not go a step.

Helen at last turned to Mr. Vanderbilt Gudgeon, who all the while had been an apparently indifferent listener to the conversation.

"This is a new turn to the affair, Mr. Gudgeon. If Blanche will not go, you must allow me to withdraw my acceptance of the invitation."

He turned almost fiercely towards Blanche.

"Why will you not go, Miss?" he demanded harshly.

"I don't like the company," she answered with a pouting look. "I have not been consulted, and I don't like it."

"To whom do you object?"

"I don't object to anybody. My cavalier has not been invited, and I won't go without him."

"Your cavalier! who is he? I thought I was your cavalier. I ought to be, I am sure, if I am to be your husband."

"Perhaps you ought to be. I shall not dispute that with you; but you are not, or at least not yet."

"Whom do you wish to have invited?"

"I wish to have Mr. Stacey invited."

"Mr. Stacey!"

All eyes were turned upon the poor young gentleman, who blushed to the roots of his hair.

"Why, I did invite him," at last grumbled Mr. Vanderbilt Gudgeon, his brown moustache dropping so low as to resemble a brace of sardines, too long caught, "or at least I intended to do so."

"Oh! did you?" cried Blanche, with affected gayety of manner, "I am so glad. Then you will go, dear Mr. Stacey. Oh! you must go."

Vanderbilt now began to draw the ends of his moustache into his mouth, and to bite them.

Mr. Stacey really was thankful for the invitation, but business engagements—it was—it was motion day in court, and he did not see how he could leave town.

Blanche stopped him in the middle of his apology.

"There, there, that's enough of that sort of gammon; if you won't go, then I won't, and then Helen won't. So you see you'll break up the party. Come along, then, and don't tell me your stories about court days, when we all know you haven't had a brief in the country." This was cutting so very close to the truth, that Blanche felt the delicacy of the ground, and added, "for of course how could you, when you have only been here so short a time? Now, that matter is settled," she went on, without waiting to hear either his acceptance or his refusal, "let us sit down and see what Vanderbilt has to tell us that is new. Come, Vanderbilt, 'squat.' We all know that you are not in such a hurry as you pretend to be. Tell us all the scandal." Addressing the others, she continued, "The finest trait in my intended husband's character is his thorough knowledge of the going scandal. He has the faculty of being always posted up to the latest moment. That's why I love him so dearly; isn't it Vandy?" she said, catching one of his moustaches, and pulling it down almost to his waist. "If ever I marry you, it



will be for that lovable quality alone. Come, now, go on. I have not seen my father since breakfast. Has the Governor done anything disgraceful in the mean time?" Turning to the others, she continued without stopping, "If he has picked a pocket, depend upon it Vanderbilt can tell you from whom, where it occurred; if he got a watch, the number, and maker's name; if a purse, what it contained; while if I am the daughter of a handkerchief-purloiner, he will tell you whether the ill gotten 'wiper' was of silk, linen, cotton, hemp, sea-grass, hair-cloth, jute or shoddy, whether plain or figured, and the private history from the great-grandfather downwards of the pawn-broker from whom the article was traced."

"Oh! Blanche," said Mr. Gudgeon, laughingly, for he evidently felt flattered by what he thought was a highly-colored statement of his intellectual powers and capabilities, "how can you go on so, making game of a fellow."

But Blanche paused only to take breath.

"Tell me about that rich Washoe lady in No. 106, that you had reason to suspect of a design to elope with the head waiter. Have they gone?"

While this question was being asked, Mr. Vanderbilt Gudgeon sat down, evidently treating the matter as serious, and willing to avail himself of so fine an opportunity to show his wonderful powers.

"No," he answered, looking about at each of the company in turn, and drawing down his moustache till his shirt-front was almost covered, "but it will happen before three days, or I am no judge. I saw him in her parlor yesterday afternoon, pretending to brush the furniture; but I am not to be imposed upon in that way," he added in a confidential tone, slowly stroking his moustache and imperial. "You will see that room empty before the week is gone." He paused a moment to watch the effect upon the listeners. "But it will not be the only empty room on that side of the hall. No. 109 will want a new occupant before long."

"What is the trouble there?" inquired Blanche, to continue the young man in his story.

"That is the room of Mr. Solomon Comet, president of the Gold Dust and Bullion Bank. He can't keep up his style of living a month longer. Here he has the best rooms in the house; besides he has his place at Livermore's Pass, and his cottage at Calistoga. His wife has two carriages, and they do say that he keeps thirteen horses. I can't speak positively just yet about

the horses ; but after next week I'll know, for I am going to watch for a chance and get into his stables when his groom is away."

"Ah!" cried Blanche, "that will be so nice. Do it. Can you be surprised that I fell in love with my Vandy, Mr. Graham, when he is so bright and so full of enterprise? There is nothing that Vanderbilt cannot do."

This she said with a tone of irony, perceptible to all but Mr. Gudgeon, who was too much engaged in stroking his moustache and looking in the mirror across the room, to heed anything so intangible as sarcasm.

"Come, now, let us go," she continued, rising; "I am sure our friends are tired of us."

They all protested; but Blanche would not hear of their staying longer, but dragged the gentlemen away.

"Good-by; remember to-morrow and the Ocean Beach," and the door closed upon them.



## CHAPTER V.

### THE COLONY OF CASTAWAYS.

MR. VANDERBILT GUDGEON had arranged for his party to leave the Cosmodental Hotel at twelve o'clock; so at half-past eleven the ladies began to collect in the hotel-parlor, while the gentlemen walked up and down in the halls. Vanderbilt was himself there among the first, and taking the arm of Captain Plunger, at once began to tell him the particulars of the latest scandal. It appeared that the wife of the Rev. Mr. Lambkin, of the Evangelical Society of Reformed and Regenerated Sinners, and who for more than ten years had borne an unexceptional character, turned out to be the great-granddaughter of a man who was strongly suspected of being an early associate of Gibbs, the pirate.

Captain Plunger, who took no interest in such things, but who was an inveterate and untiring seller of mining shares, and never lost a chance to drive a trade, made a dozen ineffectual attempts to get to the end of the story.

"Oh, hang Gibbs, the pirate!" he said, at last, becoming impatient.

"That's just the thing, captain, he was hanged; and that's what makes it so unpleasant for poor Mrs. Lambkin to have the thing come out. You see, the great-grandmother of Mrs. Lambkin —"

Here Captain Plunger caught sight of Mr. Graham, who was just entering the parlor with his wife and daughter; and whisking Vanderbilt around with a jerk, broke off the thread of his story.

"I say, Vandy, by George, did you ever see anything like that Miss Graham; she is the prettiest woman in the world."

It was seldom that Helen entered the public parlor, and her striking beauty caused a great sensation in the halls and corridors. The gentlemen involuntarily stopped walking up and down, and all gazed at her in admiration.

"What a pity you are engaged to be married, Vandy," said the captain; "there's a woman worth a man's while. You could have her, could you not?"

"Have her! I should say I could have her for the asking. Why, she has been as good as flung at my head already. I go there whenever I want to, and you ought to see how polite they are."

"Well, what's the trouble? Won't Blanche McIver let you off?"

"No; she would not consent to breaking our engagement. She loves me too much for that. But I could manage her; that's not the difficulty."

"Then what is it? Governor poor?"

Vanderbilt pulled his long moustache, and hinted that that was about the way of it.

"The fact is," said Vanderbilt, "he has been going down in that Graham mine, till he is I don't know how many hundred feet in the earth; but I'm pretty sure he is pretty nearly at the bottom of it, and what is worse, he is correspondingly deep in the books of his creditors; but no pay rock."

Again he stroked his beautiful long imperial, and made the points of his moustache meet under his chin.

"All of that may be," said the captain, "but the Comstock vein certainly runs through his ground, and he must strike it sooner or later; and when he does, he will pay his debts with the first week's crushing."

"Yes," said the other, doubtingly, "but while the grass

grows the horse dies. Suppose he bursts up and is sold out—lock, stock, and barrel—before he strikes it.”

“Well, suppose he does; you still have the handsomest woman in America; and if report speaks the truth, the sweetest and the best.”

“Yes, and the bankrupt father and invalid mother on my hands. No, I thank you, not any for me. I want to go back to Paris. It takes coin to live there. Do you hear me? No, Blanche has a clear hundred thousand. Besides, old Graham is still going on with his diggings and may strike it any day; and when he does I shall hear of it as soon as anybody. I live on the same floor, and can always drop down on her any minute.”

At this moment a stout, heavy-built, well-dressed gentleman of fifty years of age, with an air of extreme and thorough respectability, came down the stairs.

“Ah! there’s my dad,” said Vanderbilt; “I must go and see him and get some coin, for I haven’t got a cent,” and he walked towards the gentleman we have just described.

The two were soon engaged in earnest conversation, only a part of which we shall record.

“You do well, Vandy,” said the father, “to take her out a little and to pay her some attention; but be very careful. Graham has now got down, they say, seven hundred feet in his mine, and no silver as yet. That sort of thing can’t go on long; the next three months will tell the story. If he should strike it, Helen will be incomparably the best match you can make. You know to a dollar what Blanche has. It can neither be made more nor less. But if Graham should find the lode, he has so managed his affairs by keeping the whole thing in his own hands, he will be the richest man in America. Don’t go too fast, but hold yourself in readiness to act promptly at any time.”

Vanderbilt expressed his appreciation of the wonderful foresight and wisdom of his honored parent; asked for and obtained an extra supply of money, as a matter of urgent necessity considering the business in hand, and returned to the parlor where all were now waiting in readiness to depart. The company had received several additions since the day before. First there was a double rockaway. In this Mrs. Graham and Helen were seated on the back seat, while Blanche sat in front with Vanderbilt Gudgeon, who drove. Then came a second rockaway, driven by Captain Plunger. In this rode Mr. Graham and Mrs. McIver on the back seat, while Mr. Stacey rode

on the front seat with Captain Plunger. The rear was brought up by Colonel McIver in a single buggy, with a certain Mr. Bowles, a faithful and close friend of Vanderbilt's, whom he had brought along with the secret idea of having some one to take Blanche partially off his hands while he should pay court to Helen.

They reached the beach, and drove up and down for an hour. This done, they stopped, and part of the company got out for a run on foot. Vanderbilt wished to stay with the young ladies, but he was driving and must take the carriage on to the sheds. So only the two young ladies remained, accompanied by Mr. Stacey, Mr. Bowles, and Blanche's father. The others drove on to the house, where they would wait till the young people could have their romp. Mr. Vanderbilt Gudgeon and Captain Plunger would be down upon the beach almost as soon as the others, so they said, and then they trotted away up the hill. Blanche was delighted beyond measure; she had seen all along Vanderbilt's game of trying to flirt with Helen, though that young lady had never so much as suspected it. Blanche, as will be seen, cared nothing for the gentleman to whom she was engaged to be married, and even wanted to get rid of him. But she loved her friend too dearly to put him upon her, even had such a thing been possible. She, therefore, only thought of the pleasure she could obtain and enjoy in thwarting his plans. She was resolved to prevent him from being with Helen. To do this she was willing to undergo the annoyance of even having him with herself, if it could not be accomplished otherwise. So she led the way along the beach as rapidly as she could walk, the others following. She jumped over the stones, she climbed the banks, and splashed through the wet sand when she came to it, regardless of everything save the one intent to place as great a distance as possible between herself and Vanderbilt Gudgeon. The others kept along pretty well, except her father, Colonel McIver, for after a few minutes, she looked around and found him far behind. So stop she must—there was no help for it.

"Dad was always so slow," she cried in her disappointment.

At that instant her eye fell upon a huge rock in the sea to the left, that projected many feet above the sea-level. It was at a considerable distance out from shore, but it was ebb tide, and at that moment the sea had receded with one of those long swells peculiar to the Pacific, the result of a vast sweep of water

rolling in from away almost at the antipodes. In an instant she was shouting, —

“Follow me, all who are not cowards,” and scampering off across the now bare beach towards the rock.

The others had no time to think, nor at the moment did it look dangerous, for the whole distance was almost dry, and instantly all four were following the mad-cab girl at top of speed. The attempt to get upon it was successful, and before the return wave came all, except Colonel McIver, who was still far behind, were safely mounted upon the rock. But their feat proved to have been not without some danger; for, but an instant after, and while the anxious father was still shouting to them to come back, the returning wave rolled in upon the shore, roaring like another Niagara, and burst upon the sea side of the now island with a noise like thunder. In an instant the beach over which they had just passed was filled up deep enough to float a ship.

“Whew!” whistled Blanche, comprehending the situation in an instant. “Are not we in for it? This is an all night’s job, or I’m a Dutchman.”

But the affair was simply one of detention and nothing more; they were in a place of safety. The great height of the rock forbade the idea of danger from the returning tide, although the flood was now beginning to make.

For a few moments the frightened party stood waiting in the hope of a recession of the water, like that during which they had reached the rock. But it very soon became obvious that such would not occur again. In the meantime they saw Vanderbilt Gudgeon and Captain Plunger, who had left the carriages and the rest of the company at the hotel, and were on the way to join the young ladies, running at the top of their speed along the beach. It was now become certain, that while there was no danger, it was inevitable that they must remain on the rock, either till the turn of the tide, or till they could be taken off in some other manner. Blanche was literally in ecstasies of delight at the success of her mad feat. She ran up and down the rock shouting, laughing, and gesticulating to the people on the main land.

“Good-by,” she screamed, “we are going to found a new colony. Good-by Vanderbilt; I release you from your engagement; it’s all off. We will receive immigrants in our island and treat them well, but we have no idea of returning to the continent ourselves. Come along here in fifty years, and just

see what improvements we will have made, and what a fine country we will possess. We will put you all to the blush, with your old-fashioned governments and institutions."

Poor Vanderbilt was greatly chagrined. His pleasure party and all his plans were completely upset. There was the young lady to whom he wished to be attentive, cast away on an island with another gentleman, and one whom he already began to suspect of being a rival. But there was nothing to do but to go about rescuing the young people from their trying position as quickly as possible. The tide would not be low enough for them to escape by walking on shore for nearly twelve hours, and that would be far into the night. Colonel McIver soon settled the matter; Captain Plunger must take one of the carriages and part of the company, and drive to the city and send out a row-boat to take them off the rock. That could be done in about four hours, and they would consequently be out of their unpleasant predicament before sunset. In the meantime, the father and Mr. Vanderbilt Gudgeon would remain upon the beach, and watch the sea and the rock, to give assistance in case of any accidents. But there was no danger; the rock was high and solid, the sea calm, and the weather such as is seldom seen, except upon the Pacific ocean.

In front of the spot where Helen and Mr. Stacey sat, were other and larger rocks, that rose a hundred feet or more out of the sea. These were the homes of the sea-lions. Those huge monsters were lying about the rocks, literally in uncountable numbers, while the deep, hollow baying of the old ones, mingled with the sharp yelling of the cubs, awoke the echoes of the hills and vied with the sullen roar of the breakers. At times, these queer beasts would leave their resting-places on the rocks and plunge headlong into the sea, throwing the water in mimic cataracts in every direction. Then they would disappear, but only to come up again at the foot of the rock where our cast-aways were sitting, and resting their huge fins upon the edge, they would gaze with their dull, watery eyes at the golden-haired girl, as if in mute admiration of her beauty.

Helen's head-dress, in the climbing of the rocks, had come down in hopeless confusion, and her hair fell in a golden flood over her shoulders.

Henry hinted gallantly that the sea-lions were attracted by the glare of golden light coming from the land, and thought another sun was rising in the east, to outshine the one now descending in the west.

But, whatever it was that attracted the great monsters, after

a certain time of dreamy gazing, they would let go their hold, as if their curiosity was satisfied, and fall off again into the water, with a splash like the launching of a ship's jolly-boat, and swim lazily away, to make room for others.

But now the day was rapidly declining.

The sun set clear in the west, seeming, across the vast expanse of waters, not like a disc, flat and flashing, as he does elsewhere, even in the most splendid sunsets, but like what he is, — a vast globe of molten fire, round and full, so that the very slopes, from centre to edge, could be easily seen and appreciated.

It appeared that Harry knew the old home of Helen at Wilmington. Here was a link of sympathy between them. With pencil and a bit of paper he drew a sketch of it, showing a noble avenue shaded with maple trees, ending at a lake. Helen was in ecstasies, and asked for it. Just then Blanche cried out that a boat was coming to take them away. It soon arrived and took them off. When they reached home they found that cards had been left, inviting them to the grand ball about to be given by General Chainshot. The ball had been much talked of in society, and was expected to be the finest affair of the season. All the town was agog, and Blanche declared that they must go in a body, as the "castaway colonists;" for so she persisted in calling the party that had spent the day on the rocks. But not until the last moment, when Harry asked her parents to go, did Helen consent.



## CHAPTER VI.

ENOCB BLOODSTONE "STRIKES" IT IN THE GRAHAM MINE.

DURING the absence of Mr. Graham from the mine, the work seemed to go on about the same as usual. Had Enoch Bloodstone been himself the proprietor, instead of simply the superintendent of the works, he could not have been more constantly in attendance or more apparently active in its prosecution. Each day saw him at his post, nor did he leave the pit's mouth till the night was far advanced.

The work, as was the custom with most of the mines of the Comstock Lode, was never permitted to cease, except upon Sundays. Gangs of fresh men were put in three times in the twenty-four hours, to remain for eight hours each.

In the bowels of the earth, day and night are alike ; and it is only when out of employment, that the miner feels that there is any difference between them. But each foot that was added to the depth of the Graham shaft, and each inch of extension to the drifts and chambers that were thrown out from it, added to the force of an opinion already powerful, that there was something wrong with the mine ; that the Comstock Lode, hitherto so unerring in its yield, had gone wrong just at that spot ; that there was a break in the vein, and that poor Graham had sat right down on the place. Such faults were well known to occur in silver mines ; so much so, as to obtain a technical name among miners. The doubting ones first hinted, and at last boldly asserted, that Graham had found a "horse" in his claim.

In the meantime, the work upon the Pactolus Mine, situated in front of Mr. Graham's claim, was being prosecuted with renewed activity.

Directly after Mr. Graham's departure, the president, Mr. Marvin Withergreen, had come back to Washoe, and since his return it was observed that a new and extraordinary vigor was infused into its management, which had hitherto indeed been sluggish and faint-hearted. A more powerful steam-engine had been placed at the hoisting-shaft of the Pactolus, and the gangs of men had been doubled. It was known that several new drifts and tunnels were being thrown out, and old ones were being extended. All loungers and idlers were expelled from about the hoisting-sheds and offices, and those who took the trouble to inquire, ascertained that tickets of admission were no longer issued to visitors. But nothing was thought of this. Most people believed that they knew, and they boldly said, that the moment Mr. Marvin Withergreen found anything resembling pay-rock he would speedily throw the mine open, and invite, or even pay, people to come and look at it. "He was not," they said, "the man to work for dividends, but was simply a stock jobber, who would sell out as soon as a favorable opportunity should occur."

But old miners saw clearly enough, without being told, what was at the bottom of the waking up of the hitherto slumbering Pactolus. It was the growing prospects of the "horse" in the Graham Mine.

In that grand up-heaving of matter that geologists tell us about, when the mountains were forced up half way to the skies by great pre-historic blasts, and again partially settled back, it naturally occurred that the rocks which formed the earth's surface, having been broken and rent asunder, did not always resume their original places. The cracked ends would not always come together and fit neatly, but often healed up in a rough and incongruous manner. The bone-setter attending upon our mother Earth was either overworked or unskilful, for the fractured ends were not put together and bandaged in time. It was this blunder of Nature that was about to make the fortune — so it was thought — of Mr. Marvin Withergreen, and to finally complete the ruin of poor Mr. Graham.

It was about this time, that on a certain Sunday morning, Bloodstone repaired, as usual, to the hoisting-shed to await the party of scientific and muscular gentlemen who were in the habit of spending their Sundays with him in the mine. The watchman, kept always at the pit's mouth, was the only person there when he arrived.

"Stovall, the head miner, has just left here," so said the man.

"He waited for you a half-hour, and then went away. He told me to say to you, that he and the others had gone down to Dayton, to spend the day, and that you need not expect any of them back before to-morrow morning."

Bloodstone's countenance showed a visible disappointment.

"Gone to Dayton," he said sharply ; "what takes them to Dayton?"

"I don't know, sir, but I believe there is to be some sport of some sort. I don't know exactly what, but believe somebody said it was a Lynch trial. They are going to hang some horse thieves. Bob Greathouse went with them, so Stovall said."

"Greathouse, the murderer?"

"Yes, sir, the same."

Bloodstone grumbled something about men who would not attend to their business, but went running about the country for nothing.

Let me down in the mine, then," he said. "If no one else will attend to business, I must do it alone. I will go down into the mine myself. Lower me down."

It being Sunday, there was no steam in the boiler ; so the man disconnected the hoisting apparatus from the engine, and adjusted it to work by hand.

Bloodstone stepped into the cage.

"Let me down carefully," he said, standing upright in the cage, "to the fourth level, and stay here till three o'clock, to wait my signal for hoisting up again."

"Don't you want to go down to where the present work is being done?"

"No," answered Bloodstone sharply, "I want to go where I told you, — to the fourth level."

Then, as if he felt that he had been too severe towards the man for asking a simple and natural question, he added, in a gentler tone, —

"I wish to go in the old work, and see what condition the timbers are in ; I have reason to fear that they are giving way. Let me down carefully, stay for my signal, and be sure you let nobody come into the mine while I am below."

"Aye, aye, sir," was the obedient answer ; and in an instant Mr. Enoch Bloodstone felt the cage sink into the black void below.

Faithful to his duty, the watchman stopped the cage at the fourth level, and Bloodstone stepped out. All was wrapped in unspeakable darkness, for though Bloodstone knew that

he was about to enter a part of the mine not now being worked, yet he had forgotten that no light would be kept, but had counted on finding a lamp burning in a binnacle at the entrance, as would have been the case had he descended still further, to the level where during the week the workmen were employed. His first impulse was to reach the cord that connected with the bell in the hoisting-shed, and signal to be hoisted up again. But then he remembered a lamp that had always hung in the drift, a few hundred feet from the mouth, and which was kept as an extra. He had matches in his pocket; he would grope his way to the lamp and light it if it was in order; if not, he could still come back and signal to be hoisted up. The ground was familiar to him; he knew every inch of it and could not go astray. So he proceeded, feeling the side walls and counting the upright timbers, putting his hand carefully along each top joist, for from this the lamp ought to hang, until he thought he had not only reached the spot, but indeed had passed much beyond it; but still no lamp. He stopped and reflected. Could he have been mistaken? No, it was impossible, — he knew the drift so well.

He went a little farther, still carefully feeling his way. The drift widened out into a chamber. This he remembered, and, as he felt a slight fatigue he sat down for a moment and tried to mentally map out the mine, as he knew it to exist, with its drifts and its inclines and its chambers. This appeared to come all right, but this horrible, this oppressive darkness confused him, and he began to feel uncertain as to which way he had entered. This alarmed him and he hastily arose and endeavored to regain the shaft. He would act as a sensible man ought to have done at first. He would signal to be drawn up. He would get lights, and go to work properly. But he had not proceeded five steps when he came abruptly against the wall of the mine. He turned and started in another direction. Here he found an outlet, but he did not know where it led to. He stopped, listened, felt for the wall, hesitated, felt again, then tried vainly to pierce the oppressing darkness with his eyes. Then sat down in despair. He had lost his way. He again tried to collect his confused ideas, to recollect all the turns he had made, and to divine which was the way to the shaft.

After a time he fancied that he had recalled his route, and that he could go back. Again he started, but after ten minutes of groping, during which he ascended and descended more than one incline, and vainly followed to the end several tunnels, he

found himself in one of the half-dozen chambers that he knew to be upon the fourth level, but he could not tell which of them it was. He now gave up the attempt to extricate himself, and sat down to await the progress of events. He reasoned that at three o'clock the watchman, not receiving the signal, would grow anxious about him, and that no very long time after that a search would be made with lights, and he would be extricated from his not dangerous but disagreeable and almost absurd predicament. It was merely a question of time, and no very long time at that, when reckoned in a relative sense. He took out his repeater and sounded the hour. That instrument announced the time to be nine o'clock and seven minutes. The watchman would not become sufficiently alarmed to make a search for him before at least four o'clock — possibly not before five or even six. It was morally certain that he must wait there at least seven hours, for the Graham mine had but one opening, and that through the main shaft by which he had descended. As he had come, so must he go back — there was no help for it. Enoch Bloodstone, now that this matter was disposed of in his mind as inevitable, settled himself as comfortably as circumstances would permit, to wait till he could have assistance. He found a seat upon a dry plank used to level the track for the workmen's wheelbarrows, and with his back against a supporting side-timber, sat down prepared to make a great call upon his patience. Time moves very slowly when you are counting the seconds. Enoch Bloodstone felt sure that at least two of his seven hours had passed away when he again sounded his watch. But its story was a disappointment, for it said nine o'clock and fifty-four minutes. He put the almost too faithful companion of his solitude back into his pocket angrily, and again settled his back against the strong side-timber. Just as he did this, he fancied that something like a flash of light entered the chamber. He rubbed his eyes in doubt. This is an ordinary sensation when the eye is in perfect darkness. He had seen a dozen such scintillations within the last half hour, so he thought, and they had all proved to be illusions, the effect, perhaps, of the over-strain upon the optic nerve, or as some scientific men have suggested, the remains of light that has been absorbed and retained somewhere in the delicate organ of vision.

But now he looks again, and the chamber appears to be growing obviously luminous. He reflected for a moment. Perhaps, he reasoned, Briggs and Stovall may have given up their visit

to Dayton and are coming into the mine with me. Hanging horse-thieves is not such splendid fun, and they may have found it so and returned to their duty. It could not possibly be any body else.

While he was still ruminating upon the strange flashes of light that were momentarily increasing in the chamber, till now he could distinguish the line of the supporting timbers, as they ran up the sides and passed over his head, he heard approaching footsteps.

There can be but one of them at least, if there were more they would be talking with each other, and I should hear their voices. The light continued to brighten and the footsteps to draw nearer. At last the figure of a man could be made out. He appeared to be carefully examining the top of the drift and the walls, as he came along, stopping from time to time for the purpose. It is the watchman, at last thought Mr. Bloodstone. He is coming down to look for me for some purpose. He may have a message for me. He rose and stepped to the centre of the chamber just as the figure with the light approached the same spot. The two men confronted each other. The light blazed up afresh, revealing to each the features of the one that was opposite. They stood a moment looking each into the face of the other. Each was evidently surprised. Bloodstone's countenance showed more than surprise. Amazement was mingled with dismay. The stranger in the mine, who had come to his relief, was neither Briggs the assayer, nor Stovall the head miner. Nor was it the watchman at the pit's mouth, nor was it anybody Mr. Bloodstone expected or thought it could possibly have been. It was Mr. Marvin Withergreen, president of the Pactolus Mine.

Bloodstone was the first to find words.

"What are you doing here, Mr. Withergreen?"

This language was well enough, but the question was not asked in the bold, resolute manner of a man who finds an intruder upon his possessions and demands by what license he presumes to invade another's domain. It was asked hesitatingly, almost beseechingly, as if deprecating any offensive construction to be put upon the language.

"I am examining the mine," answered the other with the easy air of a man who knows his ground and has the advantage of the situation. "What are *you* doing here, Mr. Bloodstone; I thought you were strict Sabbath-keepers in the Graham mine. What are *you* doing here Mr. Enoch Bloodstone," repeated the presi-

dent of the Pactolus Mine, with an air of defiance and with a sinister smile of triumph that was in strange contrast with the pallid and horrified countenance of Mr. Graham's superintendent.

The question was not answered. The man to whom it had been addressed seemed incapable of making any reply.

"Well, then, I'll answer your question, as you seem unable to answer mine," continued Mr. Withergreen with a growing air of insolence. "Some weeks ago I happened to ride over the mountain on the outside of the stage-coach. One of my travelling companions was Mr. Edmond Graham. I suppose you know the gentleman. I have been told that he is the owner of this mine. You know better about that than I do. All I know is what they say."

Bloodstone simply grew more death-like than ever while the other went on.

"I asked him about his prospects in the mine. He told me that he had never found the vein, nor so much as an ounce of paying rock. I thought that very strange, for I know something about mines, and I have some idea of what it takes to operate one. Well, sir, just out of a natural curiosity I came back up here the next day. I changed the line of my drifts, just enough to bring them upon this level. I only had to deviate about five degrees, and none of my people knew what I was about. I ran my gangs day and night, without stopping for Sundays as you do in your mine, and last night at two o'clock I drove through your wall and here I am. Now do you understand it. I wanted just to see if Mr. Graham was trying to humbug me when he said he had no silver ore in his mine."

The other still stood speechless.

"Come here, Mr. Enoch Bloodstone," said the president of the Pactolus in a harsh and domineering tone.

The other spoke not but obediently approached the side of the chamber where Withergreen stood holding up his lamp.

A dark-blue stone, mixed with shiny points, glittered in the light of the lamp. The president of the Pactolus drew the edge of the chisel that he had in his hand sharply along the surface of the rock, and then showed it to the superintendent.

"Do you know what that is, Mr. Enoch Bloodstone?" he demanded.

The light blazed upon the shining substance collected by the instrument.

Bloodstone could see it plainly upon the edge of the chisel,

gathered in a concrete mass, soft and unctuous as if mixed with butter or some fatty substance, but no word could he speak.

"I am afraid you are not a very good miner, Mr. Enoch Bloodstone; that is chloride of silver. Now I would like to ask you another question."

With that, he put the light close to the wall, and picked off a fragment of loose rock; then from his pocket he took a small tube. It was a blow-pipe. Putting the lamp near the stone, he blew the flame upon it for a minute, and then taking the stone, he held it to the light. All over the rock little globules of a bright, metallic substance had exuded from it, and stood out, bright and shining, in the rays of the lamp.

"Do you know what this is, Mr. Enoch Bloodstone? I am afraid you don't; so I will tell you. It is silver ore, and these bright globules are little points of pure silver."

He threw the bit of rock upon the earth, and turned to regard Mr. Graham's manager.

Had Mr. Marvin Withergreen been human he would have pitied the wretch who stood before him humiliated, stricken down, crushed. But he went on, —

"It is my opinion, Mr. Enoch Bloodstone, that when Mr. Graham told me that no silver had been discovered in his ground, he was slightly mistaken. Don't you think so?"

The president of the Pactolus Mine appeared now to have finished his course of questions, and stood with a triumphant smile, awaiting an answer.

"Don't be so severe with me, Mr. Withergreen," the superintendent at last gasped out. "I am not so bad as you think I am. I am not, I assure you. I can explain to you how I have fallen into this thing, and you will see that I do not intend in the end to wrong Mr. Graham."

The countenance of the president of the Pactolus changed perceptibly to one of contempt mingled with disgust.

"Why, you fool! what do you think I am here for? Do you suppose I have run seven hundred feet of tunnel through a quartz rock that will turn the point of a cast-steel drill, all at my own expense, for the sake of keeping you from swindling old Graham?"

He paused, as if to give time for his words to have their full effect.

"Not if I know myself. Enoch Bloodstone, you are bungling in this business, and I am here to save you. Left to yourself you will come to grief in a month. I'll tell you how you



have been managing this business, and it will show what an idiot you are. You have been employing your gangs in working in the lower levels and drifts where you know there is no ore. Then, on Sundays, you and a half-dozen confederates, sneak into the mine, and pick out and bag what little you can steal in eight or ten hours' work, and smuggle it away to a mill down on the Dayton road, to be crushed and roasted. With the result of that, you pay your men ; but it takes the most of it to bribe and keep quiet the rascals you have in the secret with you. Now, how long do you think that will last, Mr. Enoch Bloodstone ? ”

Bloodstone did not answer

“It will last till the day when Mr. Graham gets back from San Francisco, and no longer. The way you work this thing, you don't get enough ore to shut the mouths of your confederates. They spend it all through the week, and will go to Graham with the secret as soon as he lands in the Territory. You have been acting like a burglar, who, after breaking into a gentleman's house in search of his plate, seizes the kitchen candlesticks and runs away with them, and is caught and hanged for it.”

“I can explain it to you, Mr. Withergreen,” gasped the pallid superintendent.

“It does not require any explanation, Mr. Bloodstone. It is clear, and explains itself. I said before, I alone can save you, and I have come to do it. You can't get this ore up through your shaft, do what you may, without old Graham finding out your trick. It's too rich. The teamster that hauls it off would fill his pockets, and get caught at it, and let the secret out. A Washoe baby three months old would know at sight that every penny-weight of the rock would crush and clean up three thousand dollars a ton. This horn silver and chloride is worth ten thousand dollars a ton. It is the next thing to coined half-dollars. Now I will tell you what I have come here to say to you, and what I will do. There are fourteen hundred shares in the Pactolus Mine. To-day they are worth nominally ten dollars a share. Next week I will clap on an assessment of twenty dollars a share. That will knock them down to nothing. You can pick up as much as you want. We will buy up and secure a controlling interest, and that with my management is as good as owning every share. When the shares are bought, we will find the vein in the Pactolus — the Comstock vein.”

Mr. Bloodstone stared at him. He did not understand. The thing was too enormous.

"Have you got the vein, then?" he asked.

✓ "No, you fool! This is the vein we are going to discover, and the tunnel that I finished last night is the road out. The line of divergence is so slight, that my people will never know that the ore does not come from my ground. Cornish miners are not not civil engineers, and, besides, they never ask any questions. That will be our secret, Mr. Enoch Bloodstone, — yours and mine, and those half-dozen rogues that your stupidity has let in with you. They will have to be bribed roundly with shares in the Pactolus, to keep them quiet. But they are cheap now, and we can manage that well enough. This is my first offer to you, Mr. Bloodstone, and I have run seven hundred feet of tunnel through a very stubborn quartz ledge, to get at you to make it. I therefore don't intend to make any other to you. My next offer will be made to Mr. Edmond Graham. It will not be so advantageous an offer for myself personally as this one is, nor will it be, Mr. Enoch Bloodstone —" and this he said slowly, and through his set teeth, — "as good an offer on your account. Indeed, sir, the proposal I shall make to Mr. Edmond Graham, if you decline, will be very much against your interests."

Enoch Bloodstone at last raised his head, and made an effort to speak.

"Mr. Withergreen, you have found me here under circumstances that, I admit, give you greatly the advantage of me, so that you can say to me almost what you please. But I told you, sir, in the beginning, that I did not intend to wrong Mr. Graham, and I told you the truth."

The yellow light of the lamp made the smile upon the face of the president of the Pactolus Mine almost demoniac.

The superintendent continued, —

"When Mr. Graham left for San Francisco, we had already found the vein; that I admit. But we had only found it a few days before."

"And then you quitted work in this chamber, and commenced a new drift two hundred feet below," said Withergreen, sneeringly. "At the same time, you urged Mr. Graham to go away and bring up his wife and daughter, and all without hinting to him your discoveries. And now you write to him every day that there is no sign of ore in the mine."

"Yes; all of that is true; but, sir, it was not to cheat Mr.

Graham that I did it. I intended to deal justly with him. I did. I will swear it."

The yellow lamp again revealed a grin upon the features of Mr. Withergreen. But Bloodstone saw it not, and went on with a supplicator's whine, —

"Mr. Withergreen, I have acted very foolishly — very badly, if you please; but it was not for pecuniary gain that I did it. It was all done because I love Helen Graham, and want to marry her."

The sentence was scarcely uttered, when Mr. Withergreen burst into an explosion of derisive laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!" he laughed; first raising the lamp up, and then letting it almost down to the ground; "ha, ha, ha!"

Bloodstone stopped, and waited patiently till the fit of hilarity should pass away, to continue.

"Oh, but this is good," at last groaned the president of the Pactolus. "You fall in love with the daughter, and in order to ingratiate yourself with her, you deliberately rob the father. The idea is quite original. You ought to have a patent right for it. Was it the young lady or yourself that invented the happy idea?"

"Mr. Withergreen, you are disposed to be very severe with me; but I deserve it. Let me tell you, sir, about it. I met Miss Graham in San Francisco, and no matter how or why, I fell in love with her. Yes, in love! You may laugh; but I was, and am so yet; and that is how I came to be here in this mine."

Withergreen looked hard at Bloodstone, holding up the lamp for that purpose.

The yellow light made the pallid, colorless features of Mr. Graham's superintendent even more hideous, as it played upon them.

Each man gazed upon the other, intent only upon his own interests and sordid wants, avarice and thirst for wicked advantage being the chief mark upon the two faces. The scene resembled a picture of Gerard Dow, representing two thieves in a cave dividing plunder.

At last, as if satisfied with the examination, Mr. Withergreen changed his manner.

"Come, now, this is not so bad as I thought. I do believe you are telling me the truth. Tell me all about it. I adore love-stories, and always read every one that falls in my way.

It's the romance of the thing, I like. But, seriously, let us hear how you came to be in the mine."

"Well, sir," said Bloodstone, "as I told you before, and to shorten the story, I loved this girl, but she did not love me. I don't know why; for I had, you know, plenty of money. But she did not; that's all I can say. She may have got her eye upon some rich Washoe man with more coin."

"May be I could give a guess," said Withergreen, "why she did not love you, but I won't. Go on."

✓ "Well, sir, I don't give up my plans very readily. I have made my money by sticking close to everything I undertake, and never giving up to any obstacle. I have always found that I succeed in the long run. With my money I knew I ought to be able to win her or any other woman, and that it was my own fault if I did not do so. It was only a question of time. I had made one of the biggest fortunes in California, and now I wanted to finish it off by marrying the handsomest woman in the country; and I had never failed in anything that I had attempted, and believed I should not fail in this. Well, she refused me at San Francisco; so I came up here and found out all about Graham's troubles. He had the vein I was sure, but was about to be sold out for want of capital to develop it. I took hold of him as his superintendent and capitalist. I intended to help him to the mine, to put him on his legs. In the mean time, I thought to myself, the family would come up, I would have an opportunity of seeing the young lady and again addressing her. This time I would have claims upon her gratitude as well as the father's, and I would have even more money than ever. That was how it was, Mr. Withergreen."

✓ Ah, now I understand it, said the president of the Pactolus; you intended to get the old man so tied up with debts and kindnesses that at last there would be no way out but for you to have the girl. I see all through it now. It's plain enough, and what broke into your plans was the premature discovery of the vein. Yes, yes, you struck it too soon and so upset everything. Was it not so, Mr. Enoch Bloodstone?"

"Yes," answered Mr. Graham's superintendent, hesitatingly, "that is about it. I only intended to conceal the discovery from him for a little time, — perhaps for only a few days, — till I could arrange matters to my satisfaction."

✓ Neither of the gentlemen spoke for a considerable time. Mr. Bloodstone had made his explanation. He had made it truthfully; his plan had been the silly shift of a weak, petty mind;

he had acted within the narrow and vicious circle of his own nature ; he had always believed that money opened to its possessor all things in the world, and he had laid his plans in accordance with that notion, which was as strong as any conviction such a mind was capable of forming. Until within a few weeks his schemes had appeared to move along in the general direction of success, and he had had no cause to doubt of ultimate triumph. The money that he was spending in the mine, he was sure would not be lost, for the mines on each side of him were already paying monthly dividends of sums so enormous, that the entire amount of his investment sunk into insignificance in comparison. He had studied Helen's character as thoroughly as such a mind as his own was capable of studying such a character as hers. Her nobler traits were beyond his conception ; he did not know them to exist ; but he knew that while she was possessed of a proud and lofty will, yet she was capable of making the most unreserved sacrifices to that which she might consider duty to her father, or the fulfilment of her own or his pledges, whether expressed, or implied. The honorable character of Mr. Graham had also entered largely, as a practical element, into the calculation of chances made by Mr. Bloodstone. He knew that Mr. Graham would keep his word, no matter what might be the consequences to himself, and further, that he would as faithfully redeem any promise that his conduct might have implied, as he would a direct one. At the beginning of his connection with the Graham affairs, he had commenced by hinting, and at last, had openly advised the placing of the family at Virginia. This Mr. Graham had avoided doing, chiefly because of his unwillingness to place Helen under the annoyance of listening to the unwelcome protestations of Bloodstone ; and not until the declining health of his wife had rendered it absolutely necessary, had he at last reluctantly yielded his consent to the change. When Mr. Graham first began to meditate upon his journey to San Francisco, Enoch Bloodstone thought he saw the success of his schemes on the point of fruition. In a short time, the family would be where he could see them daily, while the difficulties of Mr. Graham, which he possessed the means of greatly exaggerating, could be brought to bear in such manner as he was quite sure would speedily place the prize within his grasp. But, a few weeks before the time of Mr. Graham's actual departure, to the dismay of the superintendent, the chief miner announced to him the discovery of the vein. A personal examination made by

himself, aided by his assaist, disclosed the fact that they had reached a bed of ore of marvellous breadth and richness. Mr. Bloodstone found that he could, with his lantern held against the walls, almost see enough ore to pay Mr. Graham's debts, and to insure him one of the largest fortunes in the country. Enoch Bloodstone had never had any standard of human motives or human actions other than that of dollars and cents. In his opinion, if Helen did not marry him, it was only because she, in the pride of her beauty, looked for a suitor with a larger fortune ; and it is but justice to him to add, that in his opinion it was perfectly natural that she should do so. It was precisely what he would himself have done under similar circumstances, and what he should expect any person to do. He thought he loved her, but in this he deceived himself. He had amassed a considerable fortune by close attention to business, in a mining town in California. Having repaired to San Francisco with his wealth, he was ambitious to enter upon a fashionable mode of life. To do this with *éclat* he wished to marry the most beautiful woman in the country ; it would help him to a position in society, and would also gratify his vanity, which was very great. His success, so far, had been gained by never yielding a point once undertaken ; he would not yield this one, but would pursue it to success. Till the discovery of the vein all had gone well with his plans, but now they were beset with a difficulty which, even to him, was apparently insurmountable. If she could afford to refuse him, with his considerable estate, while she was yet the daughter of a man in a condition of almost hopeless insolvency, how could he expect her to listen to his suit ; once she had been, as she would be now, on the very pinnacle of prosperity. It was clear that this unexpected, unwelcome discovery, once known, would place him wholly out of the contest. He must within a month receive back from Mr. Graham all of his advances with interest, perhaps with a handsome gratuity in addition, and be dismissed with thanks. But the chief prize for which he had schemed and plotted, would be remorselessly snatched from his sight forever, almost at the moment that his fingers were in the act of clutching it. Concealment is always the result of a weak nature. Enoch Bloodstone's first impulse was to cover up the glittering treasure ; to hide it, so that none should know the hateful secret. He at once ordered all the miners out of the chamber in which the discovery had been made. Not content with this, he sent them two hundred feet farther down the shaft, and put them at work,

taking care that the line of the vein, as he now knew it to dip, should be avoided in future. Had it been in his power, he would have concealed the discovery from everybody, till he could carry out his designs with respect to Helen. Then, when all had been perfected to his satisfaction, and she his betrothed, he would, so he thought, reveal to Mr. Graham the good fortune that had come to them all. But unfortunately for this mild plan of half-roguery, half-honesty, the secret was not solely his own. The assayist of the mine, as well as the chief miner and some of the workmen, had seen the ore and understood its value. There was, therefore, no way out but to bribe them to keep silence by dividing with them the plunder of his intended father-in-law. He immediately sounded the others, and found them not unwilling to be corrupted. A hasty bargain was made between them, the performance of which, as the reader will have already suspected, was being carried out on the Sundays, when the mine was unoccupied.

Marvin Withergreen had listened to the short and broken explanation of the discomfited superintendent, with the ear of a man who had listened willingly to many a story of villainy. ✓ He had all his life studied the art of gaining and using power gathered from the weakness or crimes of others, and so far it had proved eminently successful. He saw that Bloodstone was telling him the truth, and he divined in a moment the real state of the case just as we have related it. He was glad that the facts had turned out as they proved to be; the situation was more favorable to his purpose than he had expected to find it; it was so much the more favorable to him, by just the quantity of personal vanity or mock sentiment that Bloodstone would prove to possess, let that be much or little. At last he broke the silence.

"Mr. Bloodstone, I am glad to find this matter to be as you have stated it. It puts you in the light of a very honest man, but still my offer is a good one for all parties. This mine is rich beyond all human computation, and we have every reason to believe it to be practically inexhaustible. This lode will be worked for silver ore a thousand years from to-day. It will make you and I rich men in three months, and Mr. Graham when he comes to his own will never miss what has been taken from it. The ground won't be scratched over. In the meantime you will have the girl. You will have plenty of money for yourself and Graham besides, and who will be any the worse off for the little that we will get? nobody. You keep

Graham out two or three months, just long enough to bring Miss Helen down to her bearings. Then you let him in or you keep it yourself, just as you please. It will be all in the family anyway you know. The only difference will be, that I, the friend who will really have helped you out of the scrape will get a few dollars. That won't hurt anybody. If it's a million, what is that to Graham. Look at this ore; every ounce of it is worth five thousand dollars a ton. Why, only leave me in here a couple of days uninterrupted, and I could take out enough with a hammer and cold chisel to do me. Come, what do you say; do you want the girl or not?"

✓ Enoch Bloodstone hesitated, stopped and considered, and then fell into the hands of Mr. Marvin Withergreen. They talked over their plans for half an hour, the yellow lamp-light glaring over their sinister faces, making deep shadows and lines, each looking more selfish, more wicked, and more disgusting than the other. It was agreed that the secret should be kept carefully till all the Pactolus stock could be bought in, to facilitate which an assessment was to be clapped on equal to its present nominal value in the market. Of course, nothing could be done till the Pactolus stock could be bought, for otherwise the pretended discoveries would inure to the benefit of the shareholders of that mine. When all had been bought in, then the shaft of the Pactolus was to be thrown open, and the rich ore, taken from the Graham mine, was to be hoisted up and drawn publicly with great ostentation to the mills for crushing as the product of the Pactolus mine.

All of this part of the plot was left in the hands of Withergreen, while the other was to attend to the Graham mine, to carefully exclude visitors from the fourth level, and to maintain a faint show of work in the lower level alone, carefully avoiding the direction in which the vein was now known to lie. This agreed upon, the conspirators took their way to the open air. First they proceeded to the shaft, lighted by Withergreen's lamp. The signal was made, and the superintendent mounted upwards in the cage, while his associate returned to issue by the mouth of his own mine, the Pactolus.



## CHAPTER VII.

## THE BOSH SILVER-MINING COMPANY.

"MR. CHAIRMAN,—I believe we have a quorum of directors present. Such being the fact, I move that we proceed with the regular business of the meeting."

"Very well, Mr. Gudgeon; the motion is quite proper."

"The monthly meeting of the directors of the Bosh Silver-Mining Company will come to order, and the same is now declared duly organized. The doors will be closed, as this part of the meeting will be held in secret session."

"The first business in order will be the reading of the minutes of the last meeting."

The meeting, which opened as above, was held at the offices of Mr. Ebenezer Gudgeon, in San Francisco, on the evening of the night of the great Chainshot ball. It had been regularly advertised in the "Morning Smasher," over the names of the President and Secretary. But neither of these gentlemen being known to the public, or indeed to anybody except the parties actually interested, but few people in the city knew of the intended meeting. The President of the Bosh Silver-Mining Company, printed in the notice of the meeting, was Patrick Dwyer, Esq., and the Secretary answered to the name of Michael Connolly, Esq. To the general public the Bosh Silver Mine, if such a mine ever existed, was quite as unknown as its chief officers were obscure.

Patrick Dwyer, Esq., the president, had been the porter and man-of-all-work in the store of Mr. Ebenezer Gudgeon when

that gentleman was in regular trade, and now that the shop had been given up in deference to a natural wish on the part of his wife and son, to participate in the loftier aspirations and breathe the purer air of high life, Patrick Dwyer, Esq., had been promoted to the confidential position of groom, coachman, and collector of rents, all of which duties, for his special benefit, had been consolidated into one single office. Patrick Dwyer, Esq., was both ignorant and honest. These two invaluable 'qualities' made him exceedingly useful to his employer, often even without his own knowledge. For example, Patrick Dwyer was the owner of mining shares in California and Washoe, to an amount and representing a nominal value so vast that, had it been mentioned to him in its fulness, his dull mind would scarcely have been capable of comprehending a tithe of its extent. But it is not at all probable that he knew himself to be the possessor of a share of stock in the wide world. The shares standing in the name of Patrick Dwyer, Esq., were the property of his master, who kept possession of them, and, by a general power of attorney, which he held of his servant, bought, pledged, sold or conveyed them at his pleasure. Mr. Dwyer never even knew that he had been the owner of them. It may not be out of place to explain why this was. The owners of shares in joint stock corporations are subject to certain liabilities beyond the loss of their investment. They may in certain contingencies be called upon to contribute towards the payment of the debts of the company in which they are stockholders. Again, it will sometimes occur that well-known citizens, of thorough respectability, will not wish, for reasons of a private nature, to be understood as encouraging some particular enterprise. It may not be in keeping with their position in society, for there is a certain public opinion that some of the most respectable men are obliged at times to bow before. Even if the enterprise be otherwise unobjectionable, still it may be levelled against the interests of some warm personal friend, or may conflict with the rights of some citizen so powerful that it may be dangerous to offend him. In such cases it is not only convenient, but it is indeed often indispensable to have a "man of straw," as they are called, to put forward as the ostensible owner. Patrick Dwyer, Esq., president of the Bosh Silver-Mining Company, was "a man of straw." He was not present at the meeting held this evening. He did not even know that the meeting was to be held. More than that, he did not know that he was president of the Bosh Silver-Mining Company, or that such a com-

pany was in existence. Had any person caused him for a moment to cease rubbing the horses, or hurrying the tenants of Mr. Ebenezer Gudgeon, and to read the notice of the meeting published over the name of Patrick Dwyer, Esq., in the "Daily Smasher," he would have disclaimed being the individual named therein.

"It is not myself," he would have declared, "but another of the same name." And even if convinced that he was the identical president of the company he would have added, "Well, that is, I suppose, some affair of the governor's. In these mines, gentlemen have a power of trouble, and I have lent my name to him to use as he sees fit."

Michael Connolly, Esq., nominal secretary of the company, was the coachman of Mr. Marvin Withergreen, and like the president of the Bosh, was "a man of straw." He was not present at the meeting called at Mr. Ebenezer Gudgeon's chambers. This meeting was presided over, in the absence of the president, by Mr. Melchisedec Snakeweed, one of the directors, while the duties of secretary were performed *pro tempore* by another member of that body, Mr. Vanderbilt Gudgeon.

The reader will naturally ask why it was that the chief offices of the Bosh Silver Mine were bestowed upon "men of straw," and why its meetings were held in secret. The answer is, that the Bosh Mining Company was itself a company of straw, and its mine was as yet a straw mine. To explain this more fully it will be necessary to again recur to the history of the discovery of the Comstock Lode, and its location.

We have already shown in a former chapter how, directly after its unparalleled wealth was demonstrated, a crowd of adventurers poured in upon it and seized upon the whole country, "staking off claims," as it is called, that covered the face of the land in every direction for twenty miles away. But one claim could of course, be held by one individual; and it often occurred that people, in the haste of a scrambling settlement, would claim ground that the next day they would be dissatisfied with and wish to give up so that they could take one more to their mind. This they did without hesitation upon the slightest whim or fancy, and hurried away to another which for the moment appeared more enticing, only to again perhaps abandon that for still others. The consequence was that the whole territory for many miles in every direction, had been literally plastered over with claims, to use the words of the country, eight or ten deep. At last, the ground would perhaps fall into the hands of some miner either more industrious

or possessing more stability of mind, and after months of hard work and great expense, it would be demonstrated that he was in possession of a silver mine perhaps of almost untold value. But the day that his troubles ceased at the bottom of his shaft by striking the vein, was the moment they commenced above ground. The runaways, who in safe obscurity had been watching eagerly every wheelbarrow-load of stones and earth thrown from the mine's mouth, now came suddenly down upon him in clamorous crowds. They had been forced from their claim, the value of which they had never doubted, by unlawful violence. They had been prostrated by sickness and compelled reluctantly to leave off laboring upon their mine for a few days. Meanwhile the spoiler had come upon their possessions and kept them out. They had been called away by trouble, by want, by domestic affliction, by a thousand different causes equally inevitable, only to return and find others reaping the reward due to them. But the runaways soon found that Washoe was not the best field for their operations. No one would listen to their stories, and had they made any attempt to restate themselves in their former possessions by violence, they would have been summarily dealt with as robbers and thieves. They would have been hanged. The most of them soon found their way to the more congenial locality of San Francisco. Arriving in that city they found no difficulty in disposing of their claims. They were soon bought upon speculation by capitalists, and held in reserve for future use. It might be that possession could not be obtained through them of the mines claimed, but they could always be used to cloud the title of the occupant. And as the mines grew more valuable sham suits could be brought in the courts, and large sums extorted for compromising and buying them off.

It is a matter of history that not one of the rich mines upon the Comstock Lode has escaped from these attacks. In fact, many of the best of them have been compelled to defend, at vast expense, two, four, and some as high as six claims made to their property, that were not known to exist until after the vein had been successfully developed. And when the Territorial Courts were formed, as they were later, these tribunals were crowded and overrun with immense calendars of causes of this character, known in the slang of the country as "black-mail suits." The most of the mines being owned by joint stock companies, these claims were operated in like manner. Their promoters formed themselves, or rather formed their

porters, gardeners, coachmen, and grooms, for the real parties kept out of sight, into a body corporate, with its president and board of Directors, and with its seal. To this corporation the claim was sold by the pretended owner, and possessing so much property as capital stock, shares were issued to represent it. This done the company was now ready to commence operations.

The corporation had been formed under the general laws of California for the nominal purpose of mining for silver ore in a certain tract of ground in Washoe, described in the deed. It is unnecessary to say that the tract of ground described was some well-known and valuable mine in that territory, a claim to which had been sold to the black-mail company by its pretended owner while out of possession. The company was now ready to commence working its mine. But being out of possession, of course nothing could be done till the present occupants were ejected. The most of the mining in Washoe being carried on by San Francisco incorporated companies, the courts of California had jurisdiction of the persons of the officers and stockholders, and could in that manner reach its property. These tribunals were therefore also open to the claimants. Two distinct suits in court against the parties in possession, one commenced in the courts of Washoe, and the other in California, were generally the first mining operations commenced by the newly-organized company. This done and the process served in both places, the matter was allowed to rest, or to drag its slow length along till some fortunate circumstance would enable them to make a compromise that would put a round sum in the pockets of the claimants to settle and withdraw the suit. This would occur in many ways. Perhaps the company in possession would, in the course of its operations, be obliged to raise money on mortgage, or perhaps even to sell the mine. In such case, no one wanting to buy a lawsuit, and then bring one against the company then actually pending in court, the opposition claimants would be almost sure to get a round slice of the purchase-money for their share of the spoils. But the claims were more frequently used for stock-jobbing operations. This was done by the directors of the company in possession owning, of course in the names of "straw-men," a controlling interest in the opposition claim. In this way they could, by pressing the suit vigorously, put down the stock of their own company when they wanted to buy it, or, by submitting to a partial defeat, put it up again

when they wanted to sell. Many mining directors owned interests in this way in a half-dozen of claims against their own mine, using them as so many strings to their bow when it suited their purpose to affect the stock in the market. Indeed, it was no unusual thing to see the stock of the company out of possession, at times selling for prices higher than the stock of the company in possession. And so the two stocks would be played see-saw with at the pleasure of boards of rival directors, who met and ate and drank together each night, and laid their plans for the following day's operation.

✓ The Bosh Silver-Mining Company had been organized many months before the time of which we write. Its promoters had bought the ground of two men, named Bosh. These men were brothers, and alleged themselves to have been the original discoverers and locators of the ground now occupied by two mines on the Comstock Lode. One of these mines was that now in the possession of Mr. Edmund Graham, and the other was the one directly in front of it, and in the possession of the Pactolus Silver-Mining Company. The brothers Bosh, directly that they had reached the city, had fallen into the hands of Mr. Marvin Withergreen, and his lawyer, Mr. Melchisedec Snakeweed. ✓ Though both of these gentlemen were high in the confidence of the Pactolus Company, the one being its president, and the other a director and legal adviser, they did not hesitate to organize the hostile claim and to prepare it for a blow at the rights of their shareholders.

In fact it was precisely because these gentlemen were so situated that they were so ready to take this step.

"It will put us in velvet," cried Withergreen to his friend, Snakeweed. "No matter what happens, we always have something to fall back upon. It will be just the thing to use before election for bearing the stock, so that we can buy it up."

But its greatest merit lay in the circumstance that the joint claim of the brothers covered the ground of Mr. Graham, as well as that of the Pactolus. Not that either Withergreen or his friend thought there was any possibility of establishing a claim to this mine, for this they knew well enough was, under ordinary circumstances, impossible. But they reasoned thus: "It will be a useful weapon to have under control. We can't tell what may happen," they said. "Graham may be worried by debt. Then, if he wants to borrow money or sell out, we will stand in the way. We will so cloud his title that

strangers, who do not know anything about the facts, will hesitate to buy or lend, and we must be bought off."

So they had organized two stock corporations, each entirely separate from the other, and with wholly different officers, to which the claims were respectively transferred by the brothers Bosh. The claim for the land occupied by the Pactolus was sold to the Vesuvius Silver-Mining Company, while the land upon which were the works, shafts, and drifts of Mr. Graham was sold to the Bosh Silver-Mining Company. The two mining corporations, though they were presided over by different presidents, had the same gentlemen for directors, and always met for the transaction of business on the same evenings, and at the same place of meeting.

The president and secretary being both absent, Mr. Melchisedec Snakeweed acted as president, and the Bosh Company being called to order, the chairman, as we have already detailed, moved for the regular business.

When the meeting reached the regular order of business, it was not long in taking the necessary steps for commencing a blackmail suit against Mr. Edmond Graham. The suit was to be conducted by Mr. Snakeweed, and his partner, Mr. Napoleon B. Spelter, of Nevada, and was to be pushed vigorously unless Mr. Graham would buy them off by dividing his mine with them, or by paying such sum of money as Messrs. Snake-weed and Spelter should in their discretion agree upon.

This proceeding, which was destined in the end to involve Mr. Graham in almost overwhelming misfortunes, being satisfactorily completed, the meeting adjourned.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE FAIRY ISLAND.

WHO shall attempt to depict the sensations of a young and innocent girl, commencing at the first moment when she experiences a secret, indefinable pleasure in the society of some favored youth, following them through all their varying emotions, till finally the passion has ripened to fulness, and she nourishes in her heart a pure and holy love. We are unable to say who can describe this ; but we know of two classes of people who cannot do it. First, all of the male sex, without exception, for they have never felt, and therefore cannot know, what the sensation is ; and second, all the female sex, for they have only had the experience because it was a part of themselves, and can no more be communicated to others than can a proper conception of colors be communicated to the blind man, or of sound to the deaf.

Within a few weeks Helen Graham had passed through the transition state from incipient admiration to deep and constant love, almost without suspecting it herself. Had any living creature, her father, her mother, or her dearest friend on earth, asked her if she loved Henry Stacey, she would have denied it with astonishment, perhaps with alarm. And her denial would have been an honest, truthful denial, according to her best judgment. Indeed, Blanche McIver had suspected some time, with a woman's intuitive knowledge of women, that Helen's heart was being daily made captive. And she had more than once, by a series of adroitly-laid traps, endeavored to get possession of the suspected secret. But each device was met squarely by a protest. She did not wait to be asked, did not pretend not to understand the insinuation, but assumed the question to have been regularly put, and answered promptly with a distinct negative ; always firmly and decidedly, and as the fact gradually approached actual accomplishment, more positively, till now



when she was hopelessly in the toils of the boy-god, her protests against the bare suspicion had become so vehement as to quite shut off further inquiry on the part of her friend. How could she ever love any gentleman, she asked; and when Blanche began to laugh with a ringing, musical ha! ha! ha! at the simplicity of her "baby queen," as she used to call her, she blushed and added,—

"Any gentleman, before he has at least given me reason to think that he loves me. No, no, dear Blanche, my pride would alone save me from that supreme humiliation! I shall at least control my affections till they can be saved the degradation of going begging for a resting-place where they may not be wanted."

"Nonsense!" interposed her friend; "it is the fate of our sex to bestow our love upon those who care not for us, and to be loved, and for that matter to be married, by those to whom we are indifferent, to say the very least of it. Woman is so placed that her heart may be crushed between the upper and nether millstones."

This she said bitterly, and Helen looking at her in wonder at this new-born cynicism, without speaking, she continued,—

"We never expect to have those we love, for we cannot speak our minds, but must wait till our lords come and fling us their handkerchiefs. Pah! it is a fearful thing to be a woman."

Helen came and took Blanche in her arms and kissed her, while the lady having exhausted the fountains of gall that had been accumulating perhaps for many days, sobbed like a true woman upon her friend's breast. She had commenced by trying to cajole Helen out of her harmless secret, and had ended by exposing the wounds in her own heart. So the matter was dropped. But Helen, though she as yet believed herself heart-free, was already deeply in love, more deeply, indeed, than she would acknowledge to herself.

"I love?" she thought, "I, my father's daughter, my mother's precious baby; I love anybody save them? Impossible! I should be ashamed to look them in the face if it were true."

And yet she began to observe her own feelings, much as a scientific physician observes the symptoms in an interesting case. She discovered that she had somehow come to know Mr. Stacey's step from that of all the other gentlemen who passed through the hall outside of her door. That she could detect it as he came up the main stairs, three steps at a time. And so from the landing-place her heart was in her mouth, as

he tripped along, wondering breathlessly and blushing as she sat alone, if he would call at her parlor-door or would he go on first to his own room. Then she found that in her dreams, somehow everything she saw in the end took the form of Mr. Henry Stacey. Was it a fairy or an angel that invaded her slumbering brain, the wings dropped speedily off or sank into the body and that gentleman stood before her. Was it a beast or a monster that disturbed her sleep, it was all the same; the shaggy hair or horrid scales, as she looked at them, changed before her eyes and took on the appearance of the tailor's handiwork; the wriggling tail divided into legs, the hideous claws became toes, and modestly hid themselves at the bottom of neatly-fitting boots; the paws put on sleeves; the flaming head toned visibly down and decorously took to itself human hair; the fiery eyes grew less blazing and less fearful, till at last the features and form of Henry Stacey appeared, and walked always lovingly by her side. Yet she was sure she did not love him. If it should ever become her duty to love anybody besides her father and her mother, a thing which she knew could never occur, then she often thought that not Mr. Henry Stacey exactly, would be her choice, but somebody, for all the world just like him. And she often wondered if, should that time ever come, would just such a gentleman as he, but yet not him, come to her and ask her to love him, and when she did so to bear her away with him to some place, she did not know whither and of which she had never heard, some beautiful spot of which she could dream, and so beautiful that once there they would never want to come away again.

However unsuccessful Helen may have been in concealing her love from Blanche McIver or even from herself, she was successful with all others and especially with Mr. Henry Stacey himself. That gentlemen had plunged to the bottom of the waters of despair the first moment of his love, and had never come to the surface to so much as spout or take a breath of air. She did not love him, he was sure, and his case was utterly hopeless. How could he hope to gain the love of that splendid creature? How could anybody that he had ever seen hope to do it? There had been men worthy of her; there, no doubt, were men still worthy of her; true, he had never seen them, but they existed, undoubtedly. The fact of their potential existence was the most discouraging feature of the whole matter, they unquestionably did exist and, therefore, were likely to turn up at any moment. He never entered Helen's parlor and found a gentleman there, whether an old gentleman or a young one, a rich

one or a poor one, without seeing in that person a possible suitor, worthy of the hand of the lady of his love. He knew that he was fearfully jealous, that his jealousy was equal to his love, and that that was as strong as his own nature. He therefore, in estimating the worth of any possible aspirant for her hand, always allowed for that element in his own mind.

"I hate that man," he thought, "who I see now conversing with her, and I do it, I am sure, most unjustly, because I am bad and jealous; the man is unquestionably a better man than I am, for he would not hate another without a cause, and Miss Graham will see and appreciate that fact. In doing this she may love him."

He thought this of all the young gentlemen and middle-aged gentlemen in the habit of visiting her. Mr. Vanderbilt Gudgeon, he felt sure, must be altogether his superior for this very reason.

"I literally despise him, and if I had my way would pitch him out of the window the first time I found him there. Of course she sees the injustice of this, and knows that the young man has no such vindictive, revengeful, dark spirit as I have, and will do him justice."

He knew that Blanche was engaged to young Gudgeon, but that she made no secret of her intention to never marry him. "Perhaps," he thought, "Miss Graham may marry him to release her friend from the difficulty of her position. It would be noble and generous, and that is precisely what she is." Then he saw in Captain Plunger a good man to whose eccentricities he had not done justice. "He at least is not hateful and jealous as I am. Why should she not marry him?"

The idea of any living creature of the male sex, unmarried, having any other hope or ambition in life than to obtain the love of Helen Graham, if it had ever been entertained by him, had long since disappeared from his mind. If they had been so fortunate as to marry before seeing her they had simply saved themselves from a career of heart-burnings and disappointments in the vain but inevitable struggle for that end. Of course Mr. Vanderbilt Gudgeon was in love with Helen, and would marry her if he could obtain her consent; so would Captain Plunger, so would Dick Nancy, so would Tom Snarl, so would anybody in the world, and any of them were more likely to be worthy of her than he was. If Harry saw a deserving gentleman looking at Miss Graham, he was heart-broken from that moment, because there was a chance that the temptation of so desirable a

match might lead her to matrimony. If another sort of man by chance found means to speak with her, he was more miserable than ever in the fear that she might be deceived into an engagement with one unworthy of such good fortune.

If his case had seemed a hopeless one in view of his circumstances when he first made the acquaintance of Helen, each day that had passed since the excursion to the ocean-beach had apparently added to the evidence already strong enough on that point. Indeed, until that unfortunate affair that left them for several hours as it were cast away upon an uninhabited island, Mr. Stacey had only reasoned himself into the notion that he never could win the young lady. Certain hypotheses had been first established to his satisfaction, and from them he drew his deductions. He was poor and friendless, without prospects in the future. What promises could he give that he would expect the beauty to accept in lieu of performance? Most certainly he could not ask her to listen to his suit, and he would not. But no rebuff had he received from her. Her manner had been always the same; always courteous, always kind. She had never appeared to tire of his presence; had never been from home when he had called. She did not, he thought, appear to consider him as of enough consequence to be even ranked amongst her suitors. There was always, he thought, more or less danger that she would settle down into the notion of regarding him in the light of a brother, or a dear friend,—a relationship he swore in his heart the mighty oath he would never consent to occupy. Anything but that. He had not forgotten that he was a man. But since the day they were cast away together, there had been an obvious change in her bearing. He saw it the very first time he called upon her afterwards. She did not deny herself to him. She was ever polite. But there was an obvious, a marked reserve.

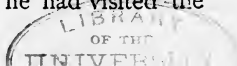
"At least," thought Henry, when he went away, "she is not about to ask me to be her brother. I have escaped that, and there is something gained. I may be rejected, but I shall not be disgraced."

The next day the reserve was not more marked. She was, indeed, a little more cordial, and the day following, there was still a more decided thaw.

"This does not look so bad," sighed poor Harry; "though if this had been her manner three months ago, it would have saved me some sleepless nights."

The fourth day he hoped to find the beauty almost restored

to her old toleration of him. But he was doomed to disappointment. She was as cold as ice; even more distant than on that black day after the cast-away upon the rocks, when he had come to see her with such a palpitating heart. She no longer appeared to be the even-tempered, consistently cordial young lady he had first known. She seemed friendly and distant by turns, changing often from a frank politeness to a pointed reserve and back again, more than once during a visit of a half-hour. He could not at first understand it. Could she be at bottom fickle, or even of an impatient, fretful temper? But that was not possible. One look at her soft and steady blue eye, one note of her low, rich voice, would dispel this notion. Whatever else she might be, she was kind, noble, good, full of womanly sympathies, of kindness and love. At last he discovered the cause of the change, or at least he believed that he had done so, — she was displeased with him; she had in some manner fathomed the secret of his love. That is the cause of her coldness and reserve; she has read me through like a book, and now knows all. He knew that no one had told her, for he had never made a confidant. Whatever happens to me, he thought, at least the secret of my disappointment shall be my own. But it is my conduct and bearing, the frequency of my visits, that has put her on her guard. I thought I was sufficiently discreet; but I have not been; she has suspected all, and in the nobleness of her nature is trying to cure me of a hopeless passion. Knowing that she can never be mine, she has resolved not to mislead me. It has always been said that a truly generous woman never allows a man to propose to her, unless to be accepted; she feels this to be true, and will not permit me to hope. So he reasoned with himself, and resolved to be more circumspect. I wish to see her again as she was before I made such an ass of myself upon the rock; for I am sure my conduct was most absurd, to have so affected her. To do this, I must convince her that I am not an aspirant for her hand. So he determined not to visit Mrs. Graham's parlor so often; at first he would absent himself for three days; but he was unable to make good this resolve; the next night saw him back again as usual; though this was a longer absence than ordinary with him, and Helen had noted it, and counted first the hours and then the minutes. When he came he gave no good excuse; he wished her to see that he had none to give, that his absence had been casual and voluntary; he had been engaged during the day; in the evening he had visited the



theatre. Her heart sank down, she did not know why. Courage, she said to herself; this man does not think of me, and no lady of pride falls in love with a man first.

Henry's plan had been to remain away for another three days, but his resolution again failed him, and the next day he was back in the parlor to watch the effect of his strategy; it appeared to be working well enough; she certainly seemed glad to see him, very glad to see him, so he thought when he first went in — it was quite like the old times, when he was on easy good terms with her, and could sit for hours and hear her sing or play and watch the effect of the mellow light upon the waves of her golden hair. He sat a half hour, and she sang for him, he standing by her side at the piano and turning the music. Then she rose, and they talked; but each minute that he tarried, she grew more reserved and distant. I see how it is, he thought, I have again given her cause for uneasiness; she has taken alarm, and I must be off or I shall be forbidden the house altogether. So he took leave, swearing to himself that this time he would only come back after a week's absence. Poor Helen saw the force of Blanche's remark upon the helplessness of women in matters of love. She spent no little time in her own room now, and Matilda more than once remarked upon the redness of her daughter's eyelids. I do not love him, Helen said to herself, but if I did, behold what would be my fate; I should be allowed to pine away and die, like some neglected and useless thing. He cares nothing for me, and does not even take the pains to conceal his indifference; when he fails to call, as he used to do, he does not condescend to give such an excuse as common politeness requires at his hands; soon we shall have him saying that he forgot to call. So she resolved that she would tear out her heart before she would love Mr. Harry Stacey. The next day after Harry's resolution of absention, Blanche McIver met him in the hall of the hotel, and seized upon him and dragged him into Helen's parlor; he had already served out four and twenty of the one hundred and sixty-eight hours of self-denial that he had imposed upon himself when last he had visited her. The trial had been so great that Blanche found but little trouble in overcoming his objection to enter Helen's room. She plumped him down in a chair; then she said, "We have all been pleading and coaxing, and praying this nun to lay aside the habit of her order for one night, and to go to General Chainshot's ball, but without success; let us see what effect you can have upon the

recluse ; now fire away ; do you hear ? ” The reader has already been informed of the effect produced by the efforts of Mr. Stacey. Though he said but little, the young lady appeared from that moment to be more festively inclined. The next day she promised to go. Somehow, from that moment the visits of Mr. Stacey were more frequent and the reception of Helen grew more like her old receptions of him. The fact was that the Grahams were to leave for Washoe in a few days, and the impending separation caused them both to throw off a little of the reserve that had hitherto stood in the way of even a kindly meeting. At the ball, both were themselves again ; indeed, they were more ; it was the day of the rock come back to them. At times, poor Harry would awake from his dream of bliss, and say to himself, I will have to pay for all of this to-morrow. She will not be at home to me for at least a week, he thought ; so I will enjoy this as it goes. Helen’s position in the house had been one of such seclusion that the young gentlemen who might have paid her some attention at the ball did not come forward. They were repelled by the lady’s proud beauty and bearing, which appeared to say to them all, as poor Harry thought it so often said to him, “ Go away ; I am not for such as you.”

So the young couple were together for the evening as completely as upon the day they were castaways upon the same rock. She forgot all her resolutions about never loving until she felt sure of being beloved. Indeed, she forgot that there was such a thing in the world as love. She only remembered that he who was her beau-ideal of the man she would love, when permitted to love anyone, was by her side, and that she was happy. How happy she did not stop to consider. She had never been so happy before in her waking moments. She had dreamed more than once that the time for her to love had arrived, and that a man, like the one by her side, had come and poured into her ear the story of his love, and had then taken her away, she did not know whither, for she had not asked. It had been enough for her to know that she was with him. So they walked up and down together, Harry moving with the lofty step that only the man can take who knows that he has leaning upon his arm the belle of the ball-room, and is the envy of a hundred gallant observers. But the hundred gallant observers were nothing to the young couple. Had they been stocks or stones or growing trees that stood around them in their promenade, they could not have been passed by with

more utter indifference. To the two it was Love's young dream. Each felt that to-morrow morning they would be rudely awakened from it all. Each one of them only knew of the joy in his or her own soul, but did not suspect of what was in the mind of the other. Each felt that the ball was an extraordinary occasion, not calling for special watchfulness, to be followed by a speedy separation that would bring it all to an end with a sudden plunge into the black gulf of disappointment that surely lay yawning beyond. To-morrow, thought Helen, he will be occupied with business; at night he will go to the theatre; on Monday we shall go away. I may not see him again. The little pleasure I take now will not, I hope, be brought in judgment against me hereafter. He is the handsomest gentleman in the room and has the loftiest bearing, and his voice is low and sweet, and his carriage manly and noble. Why should I not go with him in preference to the others, as I am going away, and this one evening cannot be misconstrued. And so she did go with him, and went with nobody else, spoke to nobody else, looked at nobody else, as Blanche McIver told her, when the ball was over and they were once more up-stairs in their own rooms. Helen blushed at the accusation.

"Did I speak to no one else?" she stammered. "Well, who else was there for me to speak with?" she asked. "I am sure I know no one but him."

"You gave no one else a chance to speak to you, Baby," answered her friend. "If you had, they would have come round fast enough, I can tell you. Your conduct said plainly enough that you were content as you were, so the boys stood back, like sensible fellows."

"I am sure," cried Helen, "that I paid no marked attention to Mr. Stacey. At least, I did not intend to do so. I think, Blanche, you are very severe with me;" and she burst into tears.

"There, there! now we are having a crying Baby, indeed," says Blanche, in alarm. "Now don't;" and she ran to her friend, and kissed her and petted her and dried her tears. "I know you did not intend to pay marked attention to anybody, darling Baby; and I am sure that nobody observed it, except only cross, envious me; and I would not have done so, had I not been an ill-natured, jealous cat. Now, don't cry."

Helen was satisfied with the explanation. She was sure she did not intend to devote herself to any gentleman for the evening, especially to Mr. Henry Stacey, of all men in the world.



If she had appeared to be doing so, she was sorry, very sorry, and would never be guilty of the like again.

Blanche had been entirely delighted to see what she supposed was a decided flirtation going on between the two. She had always favored Harry as a suitor for her "Precious Baby," as she called her friend, in imitation of Matilda, and besides, her conduct during the evening had resulted in keeping Vanderbilt Gudgeon at a distance, greatly to his chagrin. This alone was enough pleasure to Blanche, who delighted above all things in circumventing that gentleman's plans. But she was really sorry that Helen had not intended it. If it had been a mere accident, growing out of thoughtless indifference to the society of all gentlemen alike, then, of course, her friend Harry was making, she felt sure, but little progress in the young lady's affections. And, though Harry had never confided his love to her, she was too good a judge of character to mistake the symptoms of his love. She felt sure that, at least, he was deeply in love with Miss Helen.

After talking an hour over all that had taken place at the ball, the young ladies kissed each other good-night, and Blanche stole away to her own door and to bed. Long before sleep visited the eyes of Helen, she had renewed her resolution, so often made, so often forgotten, never to love man till she knew that she was herself beloved by him.

The ball had been an exceptional occasion, and she had forgotten herself, she now thought, especially as Blanche had observed her manner towards Mr. Stacey. To-morrow she would be true to herself again. Let him come to me then, and I will show him how a high-spirited lady can treat handsome gentlemen, who visit them to amuse themselves and pass away time. But, however firm her waking intentions may have been, she forgot them all in her sleep. For in her dreams her future lover came, the one she was to have when the time should come for her to love. It was Henry Stacey's own self. He came in a beautiful painted boat. She saw him coming over the waters from the island upon which they had been cast away together, she sitting the while upon a green bank upon the shore. But the island was not now in the ocean. It had been removed, and was in the lake near to her old home at Wilmington. But the lake had grown, and spread out till it was like a sea. She sat in the same spot under the trees where, with her mother, she had so often sat. When he reached the shore, he left his boat and came to her side and sat down at her feet.

He was dressed as he was on that day he sat upon the rock in the ocean. He did not speak ; he only looked at her ; but she understood all. Through his open eyes, she could read the past and the present. He had always loved her. She had been his guardian spirit, his angel of light, his own life, so his soul said, speaking to her. Would she go with him ? Whither ? she asked ; but without moving her lips. He did not answer, but pointed out upon the lake, to the island upon which they had spent their first happy day. But the island had changed. It was a fairy isle. There, as in the background of some beautiful tableau in a stage-scene, she saw this now beautiful fairy isle, and it seemed to float upon the water. It drifted nearer and nearer to them, till, at last, she could see that it was carpeted with green grass, and shaded with beautiful trees of all sorts—spreading palms and flowering vines and incense-bearing shrubs. The sound of the twittering of birds was already growing more and more distinct, when suddenly—while her eyes still followed the pointing finger of her lover and were fixed intently upon the approaching scene of fairy beauty—a black curtain was let down from above, as if in a theatre ; slowly it descended, but surely, shutting out first the tops of the palm-trees, then the sweet vines and the shrubs, till at last, even the carpet of living green had been swallowed up by the funereal cloth, still descending, remorseless as fate itself, and all was black as death. Startled at the sudden change, she turned her eyes to seek an explanation of her lover at her feet. But she sought him in vain. He was no longer there. And as she searched for him, her blood was curdled in her veins with fear ; for where he had lain at her feet but a moment before was another. Not the noble figure of him she loved so dearly. He was gone, and in his place was the wriggling, squirming figure of an indescribable monster, having the body of a toad, the tail of a serpent, and the face of a man ; not the face of a stranger that might be for good or for bad, but the face of a man, the most revolting, the most baleful, of human faces to Helen Graham,—it was the face of Enoch Bloodstone.

Mr. Graham had retired before his daughter, leaving her still conversing with Blanche McIver. He had slept, he did not know how long, when he was awakened by fearful screams proceeding from the apartment of Helen. To seize a light and rush to her room was but the work of an instant. He found her standing by the bedside holding to the canopy, the picture of fright itself.

"What is the matter, Precious Baby?" cried the mother, rushing into the room and seizing her child, even before Mr. Graham could reach her. But obtaining no answer, they carried her into their own room, and laid her in their bed. She was soon better, so that a flood of tears and a burst of sobs came to her relief.

"It was only a dream, dear mamma," she said, in the midst of her sobs. "A fearful, horrid dream. Forgive your Baby for disturbing you in this childish way. I fear I shall never be a woman and learn to sleep away from you."

At last she was comforted. Mr. Graham exchanged beds with his daughter, and in her mother's arms, where she had so often forgotten her childish griefs, she again sank into a healthful and refreshing slumber, this time not to be disturbed.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### THE BLACK-MAIL SUIT.

WHEN the morning came, Matilda did not find her daughter the worse for the fright of the night before, as she feared would be the case. No one thought of asking Helen the special character of the vision, or dream, or nightmare that had so disturbed her slumbers; nor, had any done so, would she have had the courage to relate it.

"It was the effect of the unusual excitement of the ball," said the mother. "Besides, children are always subject to frightful dreams and nightmares and like startling sensations in their sleep."

Matilda had not come to consider her daughter other than as a child, and subject to all children's ailments. Mrs. Graham had never been able to note the change from childhood to womanhood that was coming over her daughter. What all the world saw plainly, only the mother was blind to. To her, Helen was always the infant she had first known her. She loved to call her daughter "Precious Baby." No other name was so sweet as that first one, and to Matilda none appeared so appropriate. Blanche McIver made some progress in laughing her into, at least, outwardly recognizing the potent fact.

"Poor Baby," cried that young lady, on hearing this last suggestion. "Her disorder is easily to be seen; she is teething: open your mouth, honey," laughed the tormentor, "and let me see." Then she seized the beauty by the chin and back of the head, and declared she must examine her mouth, and see if her little grinders were all coming through in regular and proper place. Helen struggled to free herself, but in vain. "I have it!" shrieked Blanche. "It was that fellow," pointing to a double molar in the back of the lady's now open mouth. "He came through last night with a jump and a roar all at once, as such a splendid tooth should come; did he not, Baby? There, there, shut it up again; she shall have some of Mrs. Winslow's syrup, in the shape of a nice young man, and then the teeth will not trouble her any more!"

"Go away," cried the now indignant beauty. "How can you talk so? I do not love you!" But she did love her, nevertheless, and told her so, with a dozen kisses, two minutes after, when they were alone. But with all her love for her friend, she did not breathe to her the secret of her dream, of her horrid dream; though it still hung about her, ever present, haunting her by day, as it had frozen her blood at night. She loved her friend, and had the most unbounded confidence in her prudence and discretion, well knowing that when needed, the stock was always sufficient; but she had nothing that she could tell that would not, she thought, tend to lose her the good opinion of that friend. Helen felt like a guilty thing. She had at last become conscious of the fact that she had lost her heart. The dream of the night before, and its effect upon her, were sensations too distinct for even the poor young lady to longer deceive herself. She was in love, and with one who was indifferent to her! She had forgotten the duty of a maiden to guard her heart as a budding flower that can be given but once; and, like a wanton, had scattered its withering petals to the passing wind. This was no secret requiring two for its keeping, but was a burning shame to be concealed and hidden away out of sight. Had Helen ever received an intimation or hint that Harry's love was keeping pace with her own, or was bounding furiously in advance of it, she could not have waited for Blanche to come to her, but must have flown to her friend, to fall upon her breast and sprinkle it with happy tears like perfumed water, while she poured out the story of her boundless hope and joy. So Blanche, like the others, remained in ignorance of the secret that had broken the rest of Matilda's

precious baby, and could only surmise, and wish, and laugh. In the afternoon, visitors came dropping in upon the Grams, all charged to the muzzle with the gossip of the ball. The little parlor was filled to overflowing; everybody in the hotel called in the course of the day. The Gudgeons, father, mother, and heir-apparent, all came in grand ceremony; then the McIvers came; then General Chainshot, and Major Shrapnel, his chief aide-de-camp, waiving etiquette, looked in to see if Helen had slept well after the ball. Captain Plunger, and Colonel Hornspout spent the afternoon, greatly to their joint and several delight, for more than fifty shares of King Midas changed hands during the sitting, and as for the Poem on the Constitution, it was like an endless chain constantly swinging around in rythmical cycles. Even the story of the Indiana play actor was listened to more than once quite to the end. Tom Snarl called, and stayed an hour; and, for him, was quite in a pleasant mood. Dick Nancy looked in, but seeing persons present of the male sex, soon took himself away. Many others called whose names are unknown to the reader, — and Mr. Harry Stacey called, — and while the room was filled with all of these named and unnamed, the sheriff of San Francisco called. He had come, he said, with an apology, in the discharge of a duty imposed upon him by the law. It was not a very serious one, however, he said, for he did not think the gentleman would find it to be a matter of much consequence. He had come to serve Mr. Graham with a summons; this, he said, and handed that gentleman a paper. “Depend upon it,” he added, turning to the ladies, who looked for a moment with alarm upon the proceeding, “it is not a matter to be frightened at. I am obliged to serve these papers every day, and know what they are from the very backs of them. It is only a ‘black-mail’ case, sir; you need give yourself no uneasiness. I know that, by the name of the lawyers on the back of the document. ‘Snakeweed and Bittergin, attorneys for plaintiff,’ — that is always enough for me! Good-morning, ladies. Good-morning, Mr. Graham,” and the sheriff politely retired.

Mr. Graham opened the paper in his anxiety, without asking permission of his guests, and hastily glanced at its contents. It was simple enough. It commanded him in substance to answer before the Honorable Judge of the General Superior Court, within ten days’ time, why it was that he withheld a certain mine in Washoe, from the “Bosh Silver-Mining Company,” and to fail not, lest judgment be given against him by

default, for said mine, together with other penalties of a serious character.

“‘The Bosh Silver-Mining Company,’” said he, abruptly, turning to his visitors. “What company is that?”

“Some black-mail affair, I will engage,” answered Mr. Ebenezer Gudgeon, who, with his wife, had been until that moment occupied with a full account of the grand ball at the French Court, at which the famous dress of the lady had first done service.

Mr. Graham was evidently annoyed. He had never before been a party to a law suit of any sort, and the matter, to him, was serious.

“What kind of a suit, is a black-mail suit?” he asked.

“A black-mail suit,” answered Mr. Gudgeon, who had already returned to the more important matter of his wife’s court-dress; “do you not know what that is? I will tell you.” Here he turned, and drew his seat towards that of Mr. Graham. “I am sorry to say, my dear sir, that a city where I have resided, and done a most respectable and lucrative business for more than thirteen years, is cursed with a set of unprincipled scoundrels who prosecute black-mail suits against all sorts of property,—for example: they watch a mine until it has been developed, at vast expense, by the man in possession, when they spring upon its owner some sort of a fraudulent claim which has been cooked up by themselves, and by bringing a law suit against him, force him to pay them often considerable sums of money for a settlement, or, if he refuses, they ruin him by an expensive litigation. It is a burning disgrace to our city, but I am obliged to confess, in the interest of truth, that such things do exist. And it appears that you are to be made a victim to their atrocious schemes.”

“But, good gracious, my dear Mr. Gudgeon, nobody in the world can have any claim to my mine! I was almost the first man to enter the territory after the original silver discoveries; certainly, as soon as any after that event, and no one has ever pretended to dispute my title.”

“Oh, that is not of the slightest consequence to the black-mailer, my dear Mr. Graham. He will prove, at the trial, by a legion of witnesses, that his vendor slept upon the ground the night before you, and that the reason he was not upon the spot when you came, was some unavoidable, some overwhelming necessity, some *force majeure*; an attack of Indians, for example; and all titles, resting as they do, in matters of proof,

aside from paper or documents, the mine indeed belonging to the first possessor, as a naked question of fact there will always be more or less danger to your rights if you submit to a trial."

"But the matter is utterly impossible. I was there for weeks before any one came to look at the place even. There can be no such witnesses, for none were on the spot at that time to testify to that or anything else."

"Ah! I perceive you are very simple in such matters, my dear sir," said Mr. Gudgeon with a smile of evident compassion. "That will not avail you, sir, in the least. These black-mail claims, we all know, to our sorrow, have absolutely no merits whatever, and so they do not pretend to have, but rely wholly upon other means of success."

"What else can they depend upon?" asked the now thoroughly alarmed gentleman.

"Many things, my dear Mr. Graham. In the first place, they distribute the stock in vast abundance throughout the community. This falls into the hands of witnesses, of jurors, and officers of the court. Then the wives of judges have shares given them by the ream. Let me see that paper." Mr. Gudgeon took the summons, and examined it carefully. "Without knowing anything of the facts, I could almost tell you where that suit originated. But it is not necessary to do that; it is enough, to say, that it is framed in such a way that its final determination will come before Judge Bung. Such being the case, any child can tell you that Commodore Plug is a large holder of its stock. Judge Bung, you must know, is a single gentleman, and a warm friend of the family of the Commodore. A plate is always laid for him at the table of that hospitable gentleman and leader of high life, and his influence with the Judge is thought to be very considerable."

"But, bless me!" cried Mr. Graham, "am I to be robbed of my mine because Judge Bung dines every day with Commodore Plug?"

"Not at all, my dear sir, not at all! You do not appear to understand it. This claim can always be bought off for a few hundred thousand dollars, and then you are free."

"Free for what? free to be attacked by another gang of scoundrels!"

"No, no! free to go on without interruption. Why, my dear sir, every successful mine on the Comstock Lode has been black-mailed at one time or another in just that way, and they are glad to settle and have done with the matter. In-

deed, not above a week ago, I happened to be in conversation with that eminent banker, Mr. Solomon Comet, who made the remark in my presence, 'that black-mail suits were a positive mercy to the bankers. They were like the high winds that blew down the blasted fruit and let the healthy grow to greater perfection.' That was that great man's very poetical figure of speech. Fine, was it not?"

Seeing that Mr. Graham made no reply, Mr. Gudgeon continued, —

"Comet says that he always compromises with them at the first offer, and has done with them. 'I want no litigation' is Comet's motto, 'and will always pay to avoid it.'"

"But, my dear Mr. Gudgeon, is not that an invitation to dishonest men to come and attack you?"

"Well, it may have that look at first. But what of that? You purchase ease, at least, and that is worth much more than money. I do assure you it is, Mr. Graham."

Mr. Graham had known this long before; but, poor fellow, he had almost bidden adieu to both the one and the other.

"Then you would advise me to compromise and settle the claim, Mr. Gudgeon?"

✓ "Oh, by all means! Clearly so, my dear friend! Settle with them at the first offer, if possible; it is generally the best one they ever make."

Here the Gudgeons, having finished their call, marched away to the room of General Chainshot to answer some questions which they hoped would be put by his lady, with respect to the method of dressing at the French and other European courts.

The room of Mr. Graham was now empty of all except the family and Mr. Henry Stacey.

"Look at that paper, Stacey," said the perplexed gentleman, "and tell me what to do about it."

"I see already all that is necessary to know, Mr. Graham. I have now been in this country long enough to learn something of the customs. The suit is of course annoying, but that is all. I should pay no attention to it, except to take such steps as to prevent any advantage being taken by default. Mr. Gudgeon is, no doubt, too easily alarmed at such matters. The courts are full of black-mail suits, it is true, but as a general rule nothing comes of them in the end."

"That is comforting at the least," said Mr. Graham, taking a



long breath. "You are a lawyer, Mr. Stacey; oblige me by taking that paper and doing what is necessary to be done."

Harry blushed.

"My dear sir," he interposed, "I do not feel that it would be quite professional to take a case under such circumstances. Being here a visitor, you know, your regular counsel ought to be called in."

"Oh, my dear sir," cried Mr. Graham, "don't talk to me in that way! I never had a lawyer in my life, and hoped I should never need one. Not a word! Oblige me as a favor, and to prevent me falling into worse hands. Just slip it into your pocket, and when you get time attend to it. Now, please do so."

Harry put the paper into his pocket the more willingly as Helen and her mother, who had understood that the conversation of Mr. Graham both with Mr. Gudgeon and Mr. Stacey was upon business matters, had gone into the other room for a moment and did not know what had taken place. And so Henry Stacey became the legal adviser of Mr. Graham; but without the knowledge, at least at that time, of the family.

The father had already quite surmounted his jealousy of the young lawyer, if he had ever had any. The notion that there existed a passion between Harry and Helen had passed from his mind almost as soon as it had been formed. Not that now he would have objected especially, for he had gradually began to respect and admire the young man for his evident intelligence and modesty.

"He will make his mark some day," thought Mr. Graham. "He makes me think of myself at the same age. God grant the poor fellow may not be so buffeted by an angry fate as I have been."

But one chief reason for Mr. Graham's growing good-feeling for the young man was, without doubt, the fact that Harry had already succeeded in making a warm friend of Mrs. Graham. Matilda had admired him from the first day she saw him; and each moment passed in his company had but confirmed her good opinion. She too had found in the young man a striking resemblance to her husband in his younger days. That circumstance alone was enough to endear him to Mrs. Graham. So he was already, at the first glance, on the high road to a place in her warmest friendship. This grew and increased, till the mother more than once thought of him in a nearer relationship than that of a friend. When her baby's destiny should declare

itself, though remote be the day, it would be comforting to the mother's heart could it take this form. When she saw them stand up together side-by-side, as would sometimes occur, she often found herself looking as at a picture of her own happy bridal days, of a honeymoon far away in the dim past, but still fresh and green in the memory of two loving hearts. But she never so much as hinted this to her daughter.

"They may say what they please against the American folly of letting girls choose their own husbands," said Matilda, to herself; "I think my own country's customs the best. I married when I loved and have never regretted it, and my baby shall do the same."

A word from her might, she felt, influence Helen to do something that otherwise she might not do. The young gentleman was always welcome. That he was in love with her daughter the mother did not need to be told. All the world was in love with her baby. The whole male sex unmarried were simply an aggregate of Helen's suitors. She had but to look and choose, and this she should do to please herself, as her mother had done before her.

So Harry came and went as he listed. The door was always open to him, and he could depend upon meeting at least one kind welcome, no matter at what hour he came.

Harry took the summons away to his chambers, and put down in his register, in which there were but few similar entries, in a full, round hand, "*The Bosh Silver-Mining Company versus Edmund Graham*," and noted the day of service and the day the answer would be due. It did not take long to do this, and he felt that he had done already nearly all that would probably ever be necessary to do in the defence of the black-mail suit. While he was yet engaged in this work, the book still before him, the door opened, and to his surprise a gentleman entered.

It was Mr. Edmund Graham, the defendant.

Harry started up and handed a chair. His heart was high in his throat, for Mr. Edmund Graham could never, he thought, be to him an ordinary client, though why he would not have dared to intimate.

"You have come about this vexatious business of the Bosh Company, I suppose," he said with trepidation.

"Yes, in part, but not wholly," answered Mr. Graham. "I have just received a letter from my superintendent, Mr. Bloodstone, and I find that the enemy is not content to attack me

here alone ; he has also sued in the Washoe Territory courts. Here is the summons that has been served on the superintendent at the mine."

Henry took it. It was similar to the other. The Bosh Company had commenced an ejectment suit for the recovery of the mine.

"Is it serious?" asked Mr. Graham, uneasily.

"Not very, Mr. Graham," answered the young man. "It will involve the necessity of your employing counsel in the territory to look after it. But most likely there the matter will drop, at least till you make some rich discovery, in which case they will press you warmly in court, and try to force you into a compromise. That is the course that black-mail suits generally take. They are nothing till the mine begins to pay. But it must be attended to, otherwise a default will be taken against you, and your rights will be lost."

"I see," answered Mr. Graham ; "but Bloodstone writes me that he has as yet been unable to obtain counsel. He says that all the best lawyers have already been secured against us. It appears that a certain Mr. Napoleon B. Spelter is the leader of the bar. Bloodstone went to see him, he writes, but he was already retained as special counsel to assist the San Francisco lawyer who prepared the suit."

"In that case," said Harry, "you must employ others. There are undoubtedly plenty of them on the ground. I am sure you will have no trouble in finding them."

"Mr. Stacey," said Mr. Graham thoughtfully, "why could not you attend to both suits. That one, and this as well. I should feel better about it if you did."

"Indeed, Mr. Graham, it would involve the expense of my making one or more trips over the mountains, and would not be better managed, if as well, as it could be done by local counsel."

"But I would rather have you attend to it, sir," interposed Mr. Graham. "Indeed, sir, one lawyer is one too many ; and I am a little nervous when it comes to multiplying the evil." This Mr. Graham said with a good-natured smile, that plainly said, "I desire you to do it all."

"Very well, Mr. Graham," answered Harry, "if you really wish it, I know of no reason why I should object. I will therefore undertake the business."

"Thank you, Mr. Stacey ; I feel sure that you will not permit my interests to suffer through any default of your own, at least."

More no man has the right to ask. I go to Washoe on Monday afternoon. You will come as soon as the business requires your presence, of which you yourself must be the judge. You have the matter now completely in your charge, and I shall expect you to do everything that is necessary, and at the time required, without further instructions from myself."

Harry thanked his client for this mark of his confidence, and so the business was disposed of.

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## CHAPTER X.

### GOING TO THE MINES.

At least a half an hour before the time fixed by regulation for the departure of the Sacramento steamer, on the Monday following the great Chainshot ball, a knot of gentlemen had gathered on the wharf to bid adieu to Mr. Graham, his wife, and his daughter. Some of them were friends of the family, and others only distant acquaintances. But the sailing of the steamer each afternoon was in those days an event of importance, and people of leisure generally found themselves there, either from curiosity or to take leave of friends.

Captain Plunger was already deep in the details of the fortune to be made by investment in the King Midas Mine, which he was earnestly telling to Mr. Graham, and had already reached the point of the twenty shares of stock, which he still had left to sell to a friend as a favor. While Colonel Hornspout had recited to Helen the first two sections of his poem on the Constitution of the United States, and was now rapidly running over that part devoted to the powers reserved to the several States, and was still in full breath when Blanche approached the party with relief.

"Come, gentlemen, clear out of this!" she cried. "Be off with you! The boat is about leaving, and the people want to be left alone."

So saying, she drove them away at once.

"Good-by," she said. "Now I will take leave of you."

She clasped Helen to her heart. "Don't cry, dear, I will see you very soon."

But she was already herself in tears. Woman's nature had asserted itself in spite of her efforts to keep it down during the hurry of leave-taking. They embraced again and again.

"Write to me, Helen; and, above all, if you need anything, or if you want me to be with you for any reason, telegraph me without fail, and I will cross the mountains to you in twenty-four hours after I receive your message. Promise me that faithfully."

Helen promised, and the girls separated. Blanche rushed on shore at the last instant. At the moment she was entering the carriage to drive home, she saw Henry Stacey standing alone, gazing sadly at the steamer, as she swung off into the bay. Blanche called out the gentleman's name

Mr. Stacey approached.

"Why did you not come on board and see them off?" she asked. "Did you not get here in time?"

"Yes," he replied, "but I did not believe that she would think about me at such a time," he said, despondingly.

"How ridiculous you are! Of course she wanted to see you."

"Did she speak of me?" he inquired, eagerly. "Did she mention my name?"

Blanche looked at him curiously, as if to divine his thoughts.

"No, she did not speak of you. But what of that, Mr. Stacey? Don't you know that a woman never inquires about the man she desires to see? I am afraid it would have been a bad sign for you had she mentioned your name. She did not mention it. Think of that and be happy. She did not even give a hint of you. Come, get into the carriage and go up town with me, and rejoice she did not speak a word that would imply that such a man as Henry Stacey even existed."

He stepped in with a sigh, but he did not look happy, as he was ordered to do.

"Poor fellow," thought Blanche, "he has a great deal to learn about women."

Helen, directly that Blanche left her, walked aft with her father and took a seat under the awning at the stern. And as the wharf and the thinning crowd of faces receded from view, she still gazed anxiously, as if in search of some one that she had fondly expected to see once more. Poor Helen thought her heart was about to break when the faces of the gaping

crowd had grown dim and disappeared, and still she saw not among them all the one for whom she had searched. She knew that she had not been cordial to him since the night of the ball. But was that any reason that he should put a slight upon her. All the rest of their friends had come down to the wharf, and had waved their handkerchiefs in kindly adieus as she sailed away. He alone had failed in this only ordinary attention due to friends. Perhaps he had forgotten the hour of sailing. His business had been pressing, and he had not the time to remember that they were about to depart. Bitter thought ! The poor girl excused herself and went to her cabin. There she poured out her tears of bitter agony and disappointment, and found some relief. In a half hour, she was called by her father to come and see the sun through the Golden Gate, as the entrance to the harbor of San Francisco is called, which was just sinking into its ocean bed with that rich splendor that has already been the theme of more than one poet.

Poor Helen. She had enough to do to hide the sorrow at the bottom of her heart. She feared each instant that her father would surely discover the secret disappointment that was almost choking her, as she pretended to look with sentimental pleasure upon the beautiful scenery of the Bay of San Francisco. But she stood firm and played well her part. She had been slighted, she thought, by one she had fondly loved, and none should ever know how foolish she had been. So she remained by her father's side as the steamer sailed along, while he pointed out to her all that was noble, and grand, and beautiful in the islands, the mountains, and the green shores in and around the most beautiful inland sea on the globe. On the left lay Alcatraz, the Gibraltar of the Pacific, like a wakeful lion with shaggy mane of bristling gems, his head upon his paws, crouched and ready to spring upon the foe ; while Monte del Diablo reared his double peak, a cold Vesuvius piercing the clouds on the right.

The good steamer plunged through the water and soon carried them past Red Rock, vermilion as its name ; then The Sisters, with their swarms of sea birds, darkening the sky with the spread of their wings and almost shaking it with their discordant cries. But here night closed upon the travellers and they retired to rest.

## CHAPTER XI.

## WOMAN'S RIGHTS.

WHEN they awoke the following morning, they found the steamer already at Sacramento, where she had arrived in the night. By nine o'clock the train had carried them to the foot of the mountain, and now they must perform the rest of the journey by stage-coach. This they found ready and waiting for them at the station. Jack Gowdy was on the box, shouting at the top of his voice, as usual, the boisterous announcement, that he should start for Virginia City in exactly five minutes from that time, adding the information that any one who did not wish to be left behind would do well to jump aboard as soon as possible, for that his horses could not be detained any longer. And this was apparently not without reason, for the six prancing mustangs that Jack was trying to keep in check, were standing upon their hind feet at least one half of the time, and threatened at any moment to run away with the empty coach. When the eye of the driver fell upon Mr. Graham, he called out at once, —

"This way, Mr. Graham ; I received your telegram securing places. The seat on the box is reserved for you, sir."

Now, this was a pure invention of Jack's, for Mr. Graham had not so much as thought of telegraphing for seats, or for any purpose.

"But I have my family with me, Jack," he said ; "I can't put them on the seat with the driver, you know."

"That is so," answered Jack ; "more is the pity. The company don't allow us to take ladies outside now. They say that we pay them too much attention, and that it leads to accidents. Well, that may be so ; I would not wonder if it did sometimes happen. But, sir, your ladies shall get up outside, if you want them to do so ; I'll risk the company."

"Oh no, Jack, thank you, the ladies will ride inside. That will be better. Can you give them good back seats on the inside?"

"Yes, sir, certainly, I'll do that."

Mr. Graham turned and went to the station to fetch the

ladies. Jack leaned over the side and looked through the door of the coach. It was already filled with men. Not a vacant place was left. He removed his cigar from his mouth and looked again.

"I say," he called out, "back seats there, wanted for ladies."

There was no response to the call. Jack sat quietly in his seat and allowed a short time for the order to be obeyed. Gentlemen require a moment to consider how to act when told to vacate seats, even for the accomodation of the fair sex. This Jack knew, so he replaced his cigar in his mouth and puffed away for a time, holding his plunging horses as well as he could. But a half minute elapsed, and no movement was made towards vacating the back seats. He looked in again.

"I say," he said sharply, "you red-headed fellow there on the back seat, I want that place for ladies. Do you hear?"

There were three decently-dressed men on the back seat. The one addressed as having a red head was nearest the door.

"Come," cried Jack, "roll out of that."

At last the man looked up and grumbled something to the effect that he had paid for his ticket the price demanded by the company, and had taken his seat; that he had a perfect right to it, and should not give it up to anybody.

Jack paid no attention to what the man said, but sat puffing his cigar a little time longer and waiting. He evidently felt that his temper was about to be put to a severe trial, and he was anxious to be wholly and clearly in the right, so that nothing could be brought against him in the future. At last it was evident that this passenger, and perhaps the whole three on the back seat, were going to try conclusions with him. This being clear, he put the end of his whip down through the door, and touching the passenger, he again spoke to him, —

"Come, my friend, I want that place for some ladies. Do you understand me? I don't want the seats for Chinamen nor free niggers — I don't want them for gentlemen, even. I want the seats for ladies — for women, if you like that better. But I want the seats. On this road women always have the best places in the coach. The places you are in are the best, and some women are coming to take them, so jump out, quick, my man, before they get here. Do you understand?"

Again the stage-driver waited long enough to give the man an opportunity to reconsider his determination; but he would not stir. He understood what the driver wanted, but women



or no women, he should keep his place. So he sat still, as did the others. They would not, of course, get out till the first man called upon did so.

Jack Gowdy was a stage-driver of altogether too much experience to ask any other passenger to make room for ladies, till he had brought that one to terms. He knew that his struggle was with him, and with him alone. To apply to the others was to confess inability to deal with that one, and of course no other would yield up his place. At last Jack's patience was exhausted and he spoke out, —

“Look here, my friend, I drive this coach. My name is John Gowdy, though most people call me Jack; and I'm responsible to the company for its management. It is my duty to take people over the mountain as safely as the dangers of the road and the Indians will admit of. I'm to make 'em comfortable if I can, without too much trouble to myself, or expense to the company; but people that are very anxious about comfort, don't generally go to Washoe to hunt for it; for they are not apt to find it there in any considerable quantities. Now I pretend to know what is the duty of a gentleman, as well as any white man that walks on the top of the earth, and I don't ask no lessons of nobody on that point. In this here country it is the custom of gentlemen to give the best seat in a coach to women, whenever they happen to ride with them; no matter whether they are rich women or poor women, old women or young; whether they pay their fare or whether they go as 'dead-heads.' I don't know what the rule may be where you come from, and it don't make no sort of difference what it is; if the customs of this country do not suit you, you oughtn't to have come to Washoe. This coach is owned by gentlemen, and it is driven by a gentleman, and its rules are the rules of gentlemen.”

Here Jack's voice grew more positive, as he waxed warm with his subject.

“And if you don't get right out of that place, and get out quick, I'll call a groom to hold these horses, and I'll get down off of this box, and I'll take you by the nape of the neck, and I'll jerk you through the side window of this here coach quicker than hell's blazes could scorch the tail feathers off from a gnat. Do you hear me, you mean, sneaking, sorrel-topped, white-livered, runaway horse-thief.”

But Jack had not finished this part of his speech when the

door opened and the passenger plumped out into the road ; he was soon followed by the others.

"You have just saved your distance," cried Jack, giving one more shot at the flying enemy.

"I'd have pulled you clean out of your hide, and left you like a skinned squirrel, in just two minutes by the watch."

But the last blow was superfluous. The passengers were quite satisfied to submit to the rules of the country.

"Can we get up there with you?" asked one of them.

"No, you can't get up here with me," said Jack, furiously. "This is a place for gentlemen, and gentlemen always want to associate together ; they do ; it is one of their peculiarities. They don't like any other kind of people except gentlemen like themselves, and don't want to be with 'em. You get up there behind, with that Chinaman, if he'll let you, for I won't ask him to do so ; I wouldn't force such fellows as you are into the society of a free nigger, without first getting his consent. And for fear of a misunderstanding, I'd want it in writing. Niggers and Chinamen may be black, but they know what's due to a woman, and you don't. I ought to put you in the boot and take you over with the baggage. It would be a lesson that would teach you how to behave when you are among gentlemen. But I won't. If the Chinaman don't object to your riding with him, I won't. He can't understand your language, and so he will not know what sneaks you are."

The men climbed up behind and took the places designated. In a few minutes Mr. Graham came back, and found the back seat all clear for the ladies. They got in and the stage started over the mountains. At the first station, at the suggestion of Jack Gowdy, Helen left the inside to take a place with the driver ; thus leaving the whole of the back seat for her mother. Pillows were placed behind the invalid in such a way that she could lie down very comfortably. It is true that in doing this, she took up the room that is properly allotted to three passengers ; but in California, women travelling in public conveyances are absolute monarchs ; this custom dates back from the early days when there were but few women in the country. It was so rare a thing to see a woman travelling in the mines, that when one did do so, she was treated by the miners with the accumulated gallantry of years of absence from the very sight of a woman. The whole stage coach was hers, if she chose to assert her right to it. And when the fair sex became more plentiful in the country, still the best seat in the coach

was always conceded to them; old travellers became used to this custom, and in taking places in even an empty coach, would take a forward or middle seat in deference to the rule, well knowing that if a woman should come, though at a later period, the occupant of the back seat would be expected to surrender it to her. But now that Matilda was comfortably settled in her place, there was none for Helen except outside with her father and the driver, for the other inside seats had each three men in them; the outside seats were no doubt the most pleasant and comfortable, being free from dust and affording a fine view of the country; but a regulation had been made against ladies riding in them over the mountain. It had been found, so it was said, that the drivers paid too much attention to the fair passengers, and too little to the horses and the dangerous passes through which they were obliged to travel. But Jack said that he did not care for the regulations; he would take the lady up and the company might do as they pleased about it afterwards. But the fact was that Jack knew well that good drivers, men who were willing to face the perils of that road, and with skill and nerve to accomplish it, were not to be found every day, and that the company needed him more than he did the situation; he knew that they would not think of discharging him; so a ladder was brought and Helen was mounted up to the seat of honor and comfort with her father, at Jack Gowdy's left. They journeyed on for several hours till they reached Spofford's station, where they met the down Virginia stage coming over. The driver hailed them to stop, as he had something to say; he had come over the road without any trouble, he said, but he had heard of a party of Indians having been seen on the Truckee, and there had been some settlers found killed in their cabins. He could not say that they need be alarmed, but it would be well for them to look sharp at their shooting tools, and not be caught napping.

"All right," said Jack, as he drove off. "If they make a call on us, we will try to make it as pleasant for them as we can."

This was not really very alarming intelligence; such rumors were flying about the mountains every day; and while there were outrages occasionally occurring, the doctrine of chance alone, which doctrine, by the way, is the most encouraging assurance that people travelling in an Indian country usually meet with, made it exceedingly improbable, that, even if there were hostile bands about the country, they would meet with this particular stage coach. So they drove on, trying to feel as

safe as they could ; they at least had the satisfaction of knowing that they had not yet reached the scene of danger ; they would not pass over the part of the road menaced till after night-fall, and they had still many miles to drive before that time.

"We shall hear all about it at Strawberry," said Jack, "and then we will know what is best to do ; the road is perfectly safe up to and beyond that, and then we will decide what will be our course. Are you a good soldier, Miss?" he asked, turning to Helen.

"I don't know," she said, smiling ; "I am afraid not ; but if I am ever to be so, it will be here, for I have all that I need to live for with me."

This remark she added in a tone of bitterness, as the thought of her love and its hopelessness came into her mind.

"Well, that is no trifle, Miss, I can assure you."

"Do you think there is any danger, Jack?" asked Mr. Graham.

"Very little, sir. There is not over one chance in five thousand that the savages will trouble our road at all. Then we have the chance that they will wander off again before we get there. They never go in any considerable force. Little prowling parties of twenty or thirty, ready to shoot or kill some poor devil they find alone, and then to run away. That is the most they think of doing. I rather expect to find Bob Greathouse, the murderer, at Strawberry. He came over with me, and he may be going back. If he goes, I shall feel all right. The fact is, sir, that when a man has six wild mustangs to drive down these narrow grades, he has about as much as he wants to attend to, without having to handle his shooting irons besides."

"But," interposed Helen, "you don't seem to take account of us twelve or fifteen passengers at all. Are we good for nothing?"

"Not much, Miss, in a hand-to-hand fight with Injins. The truth is that the most of the people that go about the country in stages, had better be at home for all the good they can do when the coach is attacked. They are the merest trash in the world. I'd a'most as soon have a load of Chinamen as some of the men that go over these mountains. They don't seem to know what to do when they get into trouble."

"Why is that, Jack?" inquired Mr. Graham. "Are they such cowards?"

"Bob Greathouse says it is because they are Yankees, sir, but I don't think so. They mostly come from the old States,

where trouble with Indians and such like is never thought of. So half the time they don't know which end of their pistols to put foremost, and they will have their scalps taken as clean as the back of your hand before they think it is time to shoot."

"Perhaps they don't know how to shoot, Mr. Gowdy," suggested Helen.

"No, that is not it. They seem to know how pretty well. But they act as if they were afraid they would hurt somebody. They never seemed to me to be just what I call cowards, and I have been with them, one time and another, enough to know. When it comes right down to clean fighting, once they know it comes to that, they can look an Injin in the eye without flinching as well as any ranger that I ever went out with. No, Greathouse is wrong. It is not because they are Yankees, and he will find it out some of these days. It's the way they are brought up. They don't want to hurt nobody. And it takes 'em a good while to find out that there can't be much of a fight without somebody getting hurt, and getting hurt bad, and that that's what fighting means."

"Is this Greathouse, the murderer, as you call him, a friend of yours, Mr. Gowdy?" inquired Helen.

"Well, Miss, in one sense he is. Bob Greathouse and I have been in a good many tight corners together, and I never had no cause to complain of him, and I hope he never had of me. He may have his faults, Miss, and for that matter, who hasn't got 'em? He may be a little hasty when he is in liquor, and it may be that at times he is a little too active with his Derringers. But I'll say this for Bob Greathouse, that I never knowed him to go back on a friend. I never knowed him to tell any man a lie, nor to take advantage of his forgetfulness or oversight to get his coin. I never knowed him to pull a weapon on a man without giving him gentlemanly notice to draw and defend himself, as a white man ought to do. I say again, Miss, Bob Greathouse may have his weaknesses, but on the Carson grade from Strawberry down as we are going to-night, with a dozen or twenty Injins howling for your scalp, he's an awful reliable man to have along."

"It is certainly the character of a brave man that you give him, Mr. Gowdy."

"He is as brave as Cæsar, Miss, and that ain't all. A good many people think they don't like Bob Greathouse, and say things about him that may be true, or may not be true, for I don't know. Say things, perhaps, that they would say before his

face and perhaps they would not. The chances are strong that they would say them behind his back in preference. Some people call him Greathouse, the murderer, because folks will run against the wrong end of his pistols. But let me tell you, Miss, in a real rough-and-tumble fight, when the question is brought right down to whether you shall kill a dozen Indians or be tied down on your back and have a grease-wood fire built on your breast, I'd rather have Bob Greathouse, the murderer, as they call him, by my side, than all the Yankee stage-passengers that ever left the State of New York. That's Bob Greathouse, and you have Jack Gowdy's opinion of him, and I hope we will find him at Strawberry when we get there to-night."

Both Mr. Graham and his daughter joined freely in this wish.



## CHAPTER XII.

### STRAWBERRY STATION.

It was in the night when the travellers reached Strawberry. They found, when they drove up to the door of the station, that the horses were not standing ready, as was usual, to put to the coach.

"What is the trouble?" inquired Jack of the stable-man.

"We have heard bad stories of Indians crossing the Truckee and going south. They were seen skirting along the edge of the hills, and keeping out of sight. But, if they continue in the same direction, it would fetch them across your road. So we thought you wouldn't be likely to want to go on to-night."

Jack swore wrathfully at the stable-men for presuming to interfere in his business. What was it to them if Indians were seen prowling about the country? They had only the horses to look after and to have ready when he should get along to their station. He was to be the judge of whether he would go on his road or not. But though he rated them soundly, he did not order them to put the horses to the coach.

"Has Bob Greathouse, the murderer, been here?" he demanded, without listening to the apologies of his subordinates.

"Yes, sir, he was here in the morning, but went away again. He will be back to-night and take the coach early for Carson

to-morrow. Really, Mr. Gowdy, you had better stay here to-night. There is room for all of your people."

"Stay here," shouted Jack, savagely; "what is there about this infernal place to keep a dozen gentlemen and ladies in it over night? One would think, to hear you talk, that you had an opera-house and three theatres in full blast behind your stable, with Ned Forrest and Jenny Lind both playing and singing together. Stay here, indeed," he growled. "That would be an idea."

Mr. Graham spoke to Jack in an undertone, —

"Really, Gowdy, I suspect the men are right, and that we had better stay to-night and go on by daylight to-morrow."

"Of course we must," answered Jack, significantly, "of course I'm going to stay. I would stay, if it was only for the satisfaction of having Greathouse with me, in case we do have any trouble. But it will never do for me to let these fellows think I care for Injins or anything else on top of ground. Why, if they did they would run right over me every time I passed the stable. It won't do even to let them think I have got ordinary common sense, for these fellows can't tell the difference between reasonable discretion and gross cowardice. If a man don't keep them afraid of him, they will take him clean out of his boots and send him down the road in his bare feet. These fellows are all afraid of me, for they think I'm perfectly reckless. But if they should see me flinch, just once, on anything, I would have to leave the road in a week. They would make me get down from the box and hitch up the horses myself when I get along here. Oh! I could not live with them at all, not a day."

"Well, no doubt you are right, Gowdy, but I wish you would not go on."

"Now just see what you've done," shouted Jack to the stablemen, "with your foolish old-woman notions. You have frightened these ladies, and they don't want to go on. This gentleman thinks it will scare the poor creatures half to death, if we drive farther to-night. I know it's just a trick of yours to get us to stay at your infernal station and drink your mean, tangle-leg, kreosote whiskey, stuff that'll kill a man at three hundred yards range, as sure as a minie rifle. But you've frightened the ladies and now there is no help for it; I suppose we must hang up here. But, remember, don't you fellows ever play this trick on Jack Gowdy again as long as you live."

By this time the passengers had all descended from the

coach, and were standing about in groups, discussing the question of the Indians. Mr. Graham conducted his family into the tavern that stood by the station, and in fact, was part of it. As was the custom, the best rooms in the house were set aside for the ladies, and they were shown to them. They were made quite comfortable; a blazing log-fire was burning in the chimney, that lighted up the whole place; in half an hour, a substantial supper had been provided, and they were all engaged in eating it at the same table. Mr. Graham sat at one end with a lady on each side of him. Then followed the passengers indiscriminately, to the opposite end, where Jack Gowdy presided; though, for that matter, there was but little ceremony. The people, being all hungry, helped themselves, and ate, generally, in silence. A scattering conversation was kept up by the driver, however, with such passengers as he choose to address from time to time. But as he happened to have next to him the three passengers who had been forced, unwillingly, to give up their seats to the ladies in the morning, and to whom he did not condescend to speak, he had but little to say. They had only been at the table a short time, when the door opened and Bob Greathouse entered the room. Jack Gowdy jumped up from his seat, and rushed to meet him.

"Well, old fellow, the sight of you does me good!"

"How do you do, Jack," said Greathouse, quietly. "Good-evening, ladies and gentlemen."

Mr. Graham had also risen from his seat.

"Good-evening, Mr. Graham. Don't get up, sir; I'll come to you," and he approached, and shook him by the hand. "Going back to the mine, I suppose?"

"Yes," answered Mr. Graham, "we have started at last. Colonel Greathouse, these ladies are my wife and daughter."

"Good-evening, ladies; I am glad to see you both," said Greathouse, bowing politely at the introduction.

The ladies answered the salute. They were both glad to see him; they had heard of his prowess, and felt already the comforting assurance that the protection of such a man always produces.

"Waiter," shouted Jack, "fetch a plate for Colonel Greathouse; do you hear? and don't be all night about it; your victuals are cold enough now, without any longer waiting."

A cover was laid for Bob, next to Mrs. Graham and opposite to Helen, and he sat down and began to eat like a man who had fasted for a week.



"The mountain air gives a good appetite, Miss," he said to her, seeing her look at him wonderingly.

"I am glad to hear it, Colonel Greathouse, for my mother's sake. She has quite lost her appetite by being kept too close indoors, at the hotel in San Francisco."

"Indeed," he replied; "then she has come to the right place to find it again. A month up here will put her all right, I engage."

"Do you go on with us in the morning, Colonel?" asked Mr. Graham in an anxious tone.

"I do not know, yet," he said. "I may not be able to go before evening. I have been down on the south fork of the American river, looking after an old mining claim that I used to own over there. There is a Yankee that wants to buy it, and I expect him here to-morrow to see me about it."

"I am sorry there is any doubt about your going," said Mr. Graham; "we had rather counted on having your company. In truth," he continued in a lower tone, "Colonel, I have these ladies with me,—my own family, you know,—and there is some talk of Indians on the road. It is not as if I was alone; if you were going, I should feel much easier in mind."

Greathouse looked across at Helen, almost for the first time. Before, he had been too much occupied in satisfying his hunger. His eyes dilated as if a sudden blaze of light had fallen upon them from that quarter.

"Are you alarmed, Miss," he said to the golden-haired lady, that seemed to be enchanting him from across the table.

"I, like my father, should feel more assured, if we had the company of Colonel Greathouse," she answered.

"Thank you, Miss, for your kind opinion," said Bob, bowing courteously. "There is no real danger. The Indians never go in these parts in any force; but at the same time, I am obliged to go to Virginia some time to-morrow, and perhaps it don't make much difference whether I go in the morning or in the evening. Gowdy," he said, raising his voice, "have you a vacant outside seat to-morrow morning?"

"You bet your life, I have," answered Jack, evidently delighted with the question. "And if I hadn't, I'd make one mighty quick. I'd throw somebody overboard, if I could't find a place any other way; and it wouldn't be no John Chinaman, neither," he added, looking fiercely at his old antagonist of the morning's dispute about the ladies' places.

"All right," said Greathouse ; "count me in. I'll go with you."

Here, supper being finished, they all rose up, and separated for the night.

"Good-evening, Miss Graham," said Bob. "Go to sleep, and don't bother your head with any except pleasant dreams. I'll take care that that yellow hair of yours don't hang in any wigwam, except it be your father's, between here and Salt Lake, this trip."

Helen thanked him for his assumed guardianship of her hair, and withdrew to her room.

"Landlord," cried Bob, as he went out, "call me in time for Jack Gowdy's coach ; and if a little sandy-headed, cross-eyed Yankee comes around here inquiring for me to morrow, tell him that I've gone over the mountains on a sudden call of business, but that I'll be back on the Fork again in three or four days."

"All right, Colonel Greathouse," was the answer, and in a few minutes the tavern was quiet, everybody having gone to rest.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE CARSON GRADE.

THE party were all out of bed and in their respective places in the coach, before the faintest streak of daylight had yet tinted the summit of the Sierras. Although the morning was sharp and frosty, Helen insisted that her mother should still have the whole back seat to herself, while she would sit outside with her father. A half dozen inside passengers offered to exchange with her, and to mount on the top, but the morning air and glorious mountain scenery were too tempting to the young lady to be given up. So a ladder was again brought, and she, well wrapped in blankets, took her old place on the left of the driver.

From Strawberry, there is a steady ascent of several hours, before the first summit is passed. This was made slowly and tediously, the stage and long team of horses winding about

among the lofty pine and spruce trees, so that, at times the leaders could not be seen in the mazes of the forest. But at last the top was reached, and Lake Bigler, with its rippling waves, twinkling like the waters at the bottom of a well, lay spread out in a great green-bordered chasm, three thousand feet beneath them. Tal

Crack went the whip.

"Yah! whoop!" shouted the driver; "go along you lazy half-bred rascals. See if you can't earn just the barley straw that you waste, just once. Now will you?"

The mustangs seemed to understand the sneer levelled at them by the driver, and to resent it as an injustice, for they plunged forward down the mountain at a sweeping gallop. Greathouse sat behind Helen and by the side of her father.

"Have you any sort of shooting instruments with you, Mr. Graham?" he asked; "not that I think they will be needed, for I am sure they will not. But still a man feels a little more at ease if he has his tools with him in such a country as this."

"No," answered Mr. Graham, "I have not. I have never learned the use of weapons, and somehow when I start out on a journey like this where I may really need something with which to defend myself, I always forget to provide them. I wish now I had something of the kind."

"Well, I don't know, Mr. Graham, but your plan is after all the best one. The use of weapons is a good deal like whiskey and tobacco. The more you use them, the more you are obliged to use them. You begin in a small way, and you keep on increasing, till you must carry a whole armory. Sometimes," and here he looked at the beautiful girl that sat before him, "I wish I had never seen any sort of an instrument of destruction. It might have been a good deal better for me if I hadn't."

"You have your revolvers with you, I suppose, Colonel?" asked Mr. Graham.

"Yes," he answered. "I have one by accident, but it is quite an accident, for I seldom carry a revolver. I don't think much of them."

"How is that, Colonel? I thought them most valuable weapons of defence."

"Well, yes, sometimes they do well enough. But I like my single barrellèd Derringers better. You see, sir, in a rough country like Texas, where I was brought up and have lived mostly, gentlemen are awful sprightly with their tools. Among

such people where there is a dispute it's the first shot that most always settles the difficulty. You are not apt to get a second one, sir. When you are to have but one shot, it's mighty important to have that one count. Believe me, sir, if ever you have any experience you will soon see it. Well, sir, revolvers can't be depended upon. They shoot straight enough and they shoot hard enough, but the bullet is too small to do much service. You shoot one of those homœopathic pills out of a revolver into a man, and it's just like shooting a grizzly bear with a load of bird shot. Unless by mere chance you plump him in a vital part, it is like shooting peas into a pumpkin. It only makes him cross and vicious, and by the time you have cocked your revolver for a second effort he has come upon you with a bowie knife or some really useful weapon, and has taken you into camp. True, he may die in ten or twelve days, but what benefit is that to you or to your creditors when you have been already buried a week."

Mr. Graham acknowledged the force of this logic.

"Now, these weapons," continued Bob, withdrawing his hands from the side pockets of his sack coat in each of which was a pistol which he showed to Mr. Graham, are what I call thoroughly reliable instruments."

Mr. Graham took one of them and examined it carefully.

"You see, sir," continued Greathouse, "that there don't seem to be much of them. They are almost all handle and lock. The barrel is just long enough to hold the charge, and the bullet comes out even with the edge of the muzzle. But if there was no bullet in the barrel you could put your thumb in and turn it around with room to spare."

"It is certainly very large in the bore," remarked Mr. Graham, still curiously regarding the weapon.

"That is precisely the point, you see, sir," continued Greathouse. "It's the weight of lead that does the business; with one of them Derringers when you are in trouble, all you have got to do is to be sure and hit your man. It don't make much odds where you hit him; but just hit him, and you needn't to give yourself any more uneasiness about that party."

"I should say he would have quite enough," said Mr. Graham.

"You are right, sir; plenty to do him! Depend upon it he has something else to attend to besides pulling out bowie knives and sticking them into you."

While this conversation was still going on, the stage passed

down the mountain and ran along the eastern shore of Lake Bigler to the point where the Carson grade leaves the lake and again mounts over the second summit of the Sierras. Here there was a station to change horses, and a stop of a few minutes was made for that purpose.

"Now," said Greathouse, "if there be any danger, — and I know there will be none, — but if there should, I say, it will come within the next fifteen miles ; as we go down this grade into Carson. Once we get into the valley, the settlers will take care of the Indians and we need give ourselves no trouble about them. But just to make everything shipshape, you know, not that there is in my judgment a savage in fifty miles of here, we had better, I think, put the young lady inside with her mother, and as for you, Mr. Graham, having no tools, why, we'll just let you get in to keep the ladies in good spirits."

This was done as Greathouse directed, for all looked upon him by common consent as the commander in chief of the party. With this change they drove on. The three passengers who had been put out of the back seat by Jack the morning before had stopped off at Strawberry to wait, as they said, for the evening coach ; so that Greathouse and Jack had the roof all to themselves, the Chinaman excepted. But the poor celestial of course was in total ignorance of any special danger beyond that which he knew full well surrounded and beset his entire race every moment they remained in the land of American liberty.

Helen had taken the place on the right side of the coach at the window that overlooked the deep mountain gorge along the face of which the grade was cut. She could see all that took place ahead of the coach by looking out of her window and was almost the only one inside who could do so. Next to her was her mother, between herself and her father who was at the opposite window. But the road was so narrow that on that side nothing could be seen except the bank or mountain wall which came close against the side of the passing coach, at times actually rubbing against it.

"Now, Jack," said Greathouse, looking carefully at the caps on his Derringer. "Let your team go, you understand ; send 'em. I don't believe there are any Injins on this road ; there is not one chance in a thousand that there is a red skin this side of the big meadows of the Truckee."

"All right, Bob, but stranger things have happened, you know."

"Yes, Jack, stranger things have happened, and that is why I say send your horses as if the devil was after them. The less time we spend fooling along on this grade will be the better for all concerned. And that simply means common prudence. I told that yellow-headed gal that I would undertake that her hair should hang in no wigwam but her father's this trip, and if I am to keep my word, I don't want to take any more chances than I can help. As for the rest of the people inside I don't care one chew of fine cut, if old Winnemuck sets up a wig-shop to-morrow and takes 'em for dummies in his window."

"Them's my sentiments," cried Jack, "but let's pull the ladies through if we die for it."

"Very good, Jack, but don't be bashful with your whip-cracker. If we are going to Carson's let us go along. There is no special need of our staying about here. The country is not very interesting, at least not to me."

Jack was already laying on his whip with might and main. The wild mustangs, unused to such treatment, sprang down the narrow grade at the top of their speed. The coach rolled from side to side like a ship in a gale, while the trees and rocks flew past as if running a race in the opposite direction. This speed was kept up for half an hour, and the valley, as they could see it at each turn of the road, drew sensibly nearer to them.

"I suspect that we have been frightened at nothing, Jack," said Greathouse. "It looks a little like running away from our own shadows, doesn't it?"

Jack didn't know. He was too much occupied with his horses to think anything about the matter.

"Well," said Greathouse, "he would have left the territory for ever if anything had happened to that girl while I was along. If a gentleman has any business in this world that nature has marked out for him, it is to protect and defend women when they are in danger or trouble. And they ought to be prudent about it and not let them get into peril when they can prevent it. That being the case, I did right to look for the worst and be ready to meet it. I'm glad there is no danger."

Just as he said this, the coach turned suddenly a projecting point, made by a spur of the mountain, that had concealed the road in advance till this moment, and revealed to them a serious obstruction in the path. At a quarter of a mile ahead of them an immense log, portion of the trunk of a tree, was stretched squarely across the road, one end resting against the

bank or mountain side to the left, and the other projecting over the precipice to the right, which here broke off squarely for a thousand feet down. The horses were plunging along towards it at a fearful speed, and if not stopped would surely be thrown down the fearful declivity. Jack's first and natural impulse was to clap on the break and pull up his horses as quickly as possible. But Greathouse caught his arm and held it.

"Gowdy," he said, in a firm but hurried voice, "that log has been put there by Injuns, and there is an Injun behind it now, at this minute, waiting for us. I just saw his head drop down to hide. Don't stop your horses, for the woods over our heads are full of them, and they are going to roll the rocks down on us as soon as we are stopped at the log. Keep right on at full speed, as if there was nothing in the way and the road clear. Leave the rest to me."

This said, the giant with one bound jumped forward from the roof clear over the off wheel horses, landing on the outer edge of the road, and without stopping an instant flew forward with the speed of the wind, passing the leaders on the outside next to the precipice, and ran with tremendous bounds directly towards the log. Not a moment was to be lost. He must beat the team that was furiously galloping behind him, reach the log in advance of it, and clear the way before it could come up. The fright given to the mustangs by Greathouse rushing past them made them run still faster, so that it almost appeared that they would reach the point of danger as soon as he could. But Greathouse, as if spurred by the desperate condition in which all were placed, almost doubled his speed and soon widened the gap between himself and the horses to fifty yards. All this Jack saw, but was powerless to aid. He could only put on the break and slow them down a little, and so they ran till Greathouse was within five rods of the log. At this moment, to the horror of Jack, he saw an Indian who had been concealed up to that moment, rise up from behind it to his knees and level a gun deliberately at Greathouse.

"It is all over," muttered Jack, tugging at his horses and pushing with his foot upon the break. "We go down the bank this time in a heap."

But this idea had not fully passed through his brain when he heard a short sharp pop and the Indian sprang his full length in the air, and fell forward. Then he saw Greathouse lift the log that to him seemed a load for four horses, and send it thundering down the precipice, and in another instant the Indian, like

a bundle of rags flew into the air after the log. The body was still sinking in mid-air not half-way to the bottom, when Jack whirled with furious speed over the spot where, but fifteen seconds before, the savage had been lying in malicious security.

"Come on, don't stop there to swap horses!" shouted Greathouse, still running at the top of his speed down the grade in advance.

And the advice was good, for already the road behind them was almost hidden from view by the pile of rocks, trees and earth that was rolling over it like a vast and irresistible avalanche. The savages, as Greathouse had suspected, had been lying in concealment among the trees and rocks above, waiting for the coach to be stopped by the log, to roll down upon it the accumulated debris of the mountain side. But the attack had failed, and the yells of savage disappointment were borne to the retreating coach now in perfect safety running away down into the inhabited valley.

"Don't stop for me," cried Greathouse, as the coach drove alongside of him; "I can get up without your stopping."

As he laid his hand upon the iron of the coach to mount, his eyes met those of Helen Graham as she sat deadly pale by the window. She alone of all inside the vehicle knew what had transpired. She had seen it from the first, but had refrained from speaking, to save her mother the shock of terror. In an instant Greathouse had vaulted up the coach's side and was back in his seat.

"Jack," said he, "do you know that that yellow-haired girl saw the whole of that affair from beginning to end. She sat by the window and looked on without giving a hint of the danger, and never squealed once. She didn't want to scare the old woman. I saw how it was just at a glance. Not one of 'em in there have any idea of what has happened except her."

"Wheu! wheu!" whistled Jack, "but isn't she a trump! I know'd that she would do, the first time I clapped my eyes on her. She has got a thorough-bred look, wide between the eyes and with fine-cut nostrils like an Eclipse colt. I never saw them points fail to make a winner whether in man or beast. She is good for four mile heats, you bet your life."

"Yes, she'll do," said Greathouse, "and I am glad she's safe through that pass. For do you know, Jack, that between ourselves, we ought not to have let those people come over here to-day till we knew the road was clear."

"That's so; but do you know, Bob, that on the road if you



begin to talk prudence they all think you are a coward, and from that time the dogs won't smell of you, but will turn up their noses and pass along."

"It is safely over anyhow, Jack, and we'll let it go at that; but didn't I make that Injin jump? After this let any man ever talk to me about six-shooters. I don't want to hear him. If I'd gone for that Injun with a revolver I'd have shot about four mustard seeds into him before I would have got him down, and by that time you would have been over the precipice and the rocks would have been down upon me; and where would my creditors have been I would like to know?"

"Bob, I begin to think there is something in what you say against six-shooters, though I have always carried them."

"I know I am right, Jack. Here is the sort of an instrument," and Greathouse pulled out the empty Derringer and held it in his open hand, looking at it in transports of admiration. "It looks like a pug pup turned upside down, don't it? You ought to have seen the hole it made in that Injun's gizzard-box. You could have pitched your hat through it. He had a bead drawn on me when I fired, yet he never got his gun off; it is lying back there now in the road at full cock. If I had shot him with a six-shooter he would have got me down before he would have known he was hurt. A Derringer is not a pretty thing to look at, but it is a mighty useful thing to have around in times like these."

This said, Greathouse restored the weapon carefully to his pocket.

"We will be in Carson in fifteen minutes," he said, leaning over the side of the coach and speaking down to Helen who was looking out of the window.

"Thank you, Colonel Greathouse," she answered him, with a smile that said more plainly than the words, "if we reach there, it is you who have brought us in safety." Her color was now restored, and she looked more beautiful than ever.

"I am satisfied," said Bob, turning to Jack. "I have had my pay; and I am ready to do the same thing to-morrow."

Jack laughed. "Count me out, Bob," he said; "I've seen enough of that sort of thing. Not any more for me, thank you. I'll take it in another shape, next time, if it's all the same to you."

They were soon at Carson, where the horses were changed, and where many of the passengers stopped. But both Bob and Jack agreed that, as Helen had not mentioned the adventure,

they would not do so to any in the coach, at least till they reached Virginia, and until Mrs. Graham was safely settled in her hotel. But Bob took the clerk of the station aside, just before they drove off, and told him what had occurred, so that the people could be informed of the state of the road, and put upon their guard. Then they drove away towards Virginia.

The day was gone when they toiled up the sides of Mount Davidson, to their new home. They found there apartments all ready to receive them, and as comfortably furnished as they had reason to expect. Mr. Bloodstone was at the hotel, and showed them up. He had no good news for Mr. Graham. ✓ The mine had not improved, but was as discouraging as ever. He was studiously polite to Helen, who returned his attention civilly but coolly. In half an hour he went away, saying that he would call again in the morning.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### SNAKEWEED AND SPELTER, COUNSELLORS-AT-LAW.

By the time Henry Stacey had reached the hotel, the day of Helen's departure, Blanche had extracted from him his secret. Not by way of direct confession, it is true; but he had allowed her to rate him soundly for his folly in permitting the lady of his heart to go away without at least declaring to her his love.

"Why did you not seize her hand and tell her you loved her, and swear that you would die on the spot if she did not reciprocate your passion. That is the way to get on with a woman. You are altogether too modest for this world, Mr. Stacey," she cried; "I am sure you have mistaken your profession; you should have gone into the church."

"I have no doubt of it," said poor Harry despondently; "I have long since come to that conclusion. But you would not have me ask the beautiful Helen Graham to starve with me, would you?"

"Pooh!" cried Blanche, with angry energy. "Starve with you? How can she starve with you in this country? You could support her by breaking rock in the street, if in no other

way. And if she loved you, she would help you to do it, or I am no judge of her character."

"That may be, Blanche ; but she does not love me. There is the truth."

"How do you know that she does not love you ?" demanded Blanche with severity. "Who has told you she does not? Have you asked her? Certainly no one else has the right to speak for her."

Harry could not answer this question. It was true that he had never asked her. He had not dared to do it. He was sure of meeting his death sentence in her refusal. "I could not ask her," he said at last. "I knew too well what would be the answer."

Blanche stopped him impatiently. "You are going over there soon, are you not?" she asked. "You have some business that calls you thither?"

"Yes ; I am to go some time next week, but for a few days only."

"That is enough. If you were to stay but an hour, that would be time enough to find out the state of her mind."

"How?" inquired Harry, looking at her as if a new light was coming from that quarter.

"The plan is simple," she said. "Ask her. She is an honest girl, and will tell you the truth."

He handed the young lady out of the carriage, and walked with her to her door.

"Good-evening, Mr. Stacey," she said. "Don't forget what I have told you. I cannot give you much encouragement, for she has never dropped so much as a hint to me about you ; but that has no bearing upon the case ; no girl of spirit is willing to be thought in love with a man who is indifferent to her. Go to Helen, and tell her that you love her ; and then we will see what she thinks about it. Call and see us often, Mr. Stacey ; we are always at home. Good-evening," and she closed the door.

Fortunately, Blanche was a girl possessing a large fund of good temper and forbearance, or otherwise she would have found cause for regretting the pressing invitation she had given to Harry to call often. He did call often, very often ; and stayed a long time when he called. His idol was gone from him, and his only solace was to sit and talk about her to Blanche. He had had no confidant before, and now, for the first time, knew what a luxury it was. Blanche knew his

Helen, and could understand at least his longings to hear of her, and to let out the fullness of his soul to a willing and sympathetic ear. So he sat from morning till night, every day, and talked with her. When other company was present, upon general topics, and when they were alone, scarcely waiting for the door to close upon the retreating form, before flying back to that which was nearest to his heart. She kept his secret loyally, and encouraged him all she could. But, as for hazarding an opinion upon his prospects, that she did not dare to do; for she had been, herself, sorely puzzled by Helen's treatment of the young man, and could not quite fathom it.

Harry's frequent visits to Blanche were not long in attracting attention. Vanderbilt Gudgeon was almost the first to learn of the new flirtation that was going on in No. 46, the apartments of his fiancée, as he called her. "I will bring that to an end quickly," he said to Mr. Bowles, who had, with faithful exactness, made and reported this discovery. So the black-browed youth bounced into No. 46, where Harry and Blanche sat, his moustache pulled so tightly as to draw the corners of his eyes down to his cheek-bones. "So, I hear you have a great deal of company lately, Blanche," he growled; "for a young lady engaged to be married, do you think that is just the thing to do?"

He had not spoken to Harry, nor even so much as recognized his presence.

"Yes, I do," said the young lady sharply, "if it happens to suit me. I like company, and the more I have, the better I like it, if it's the right kind. I know some people whose company I don't like, and they will oblige me by staying away as much as possible."

"That is my chief objection," said Vanderbilt, pretending not to see the sarcasm levelled at himself. "It is not your having company, but it is the quality of the people who visit you. There are some people I don't like."

"Are there," she cried, sneeringly. "'Fe! fo! fum! I smell the blood of an Englishman.' Who has my Lord Nut-cracker seen that he does not like?"

"I do not think I need to say," he answered, grumblingly.

"Well, let me say one thing to you, Mr. Vanderbilt Gudgeon," said the young lady, now assuming a decided manner, and rising up and looking the young man in the eye, "by way of advice; and it is this: if you wish me to see less of any particular individual, your best plan is not to let me know, or

even suspect who that individual is ; for if I find out, I will have no one else come to see me except that person. They shall come and stay all the time ! Do you understand ? Don't go away, Mr. Stacey," she cried, as she saw Harry rising to depart ; "it is not you that my intended husband refers to, I am sure. Is it, Vandy ?" she said, again turning to that gentleman.

"No ; of course not. No one could object to Mr. Stacey. I am sure I could not do so."

"There now, sit down, Harry ; I know that Vandy loves you like a brother. . He has heard of some one else that he does not like, and he has come in an angry mood. But generous Vandy never remains angry long. You accept his apology, do you not ? There, be friends, and love each other," and she pulled Mr. Gudgeon along, and forced him to extend his hand to the frightened Harry, and to ask him to sit down and remain longer. After this they heard at least no open objection from Vanderbilt Gudgeon to Harry's visits.

One afternoon the young man came in to take leave of Blanche for a few days. He was going to Washoe upon business ; what business he had never told her, for somehow he had always felt a delicacy in the position of counsel for Mr. Graham, under the circumstances ; he had a notion that his position was almost one of false pretence. Would Mr. Graham have confided his legal affairs to me in this manner had he dreamed that I thought of his daughter other than as an acquaintance ?

"Going to Washoe?" cried Blanche, joyously. "Then you will see our baby ; Oh ! how nice ! kiss her a hundred times for me, and don't forget it."

Seeing Harry blushing at the very idea, she stopped and changed her manner.

"Poor fellow," she said, "I was only thinking of myself and of the pleasure it would be to me to see the darling, — while you need to see her more than I do, a thousand fold ; sit down and let me talk to you."

Harry took a seat on the corner of a chair like a school-boy about to be catechised.

"Don't kiss her for me, not once ; you will not I am sure get any more kisses than you will want for yourself, and I will not ask you to divide with me. I wish to give you a little advice, Harry."

"I shall be glad to take it from you, Blanche," he said.

"Yes, perhaps so ; but will you promise to follow it."

"I will do my best ; I cannot promise positively. I will try to behave as a gentleman ought to do."

"Bother the gentlemen ; now you are going to tell me that old story of yours about what is due to Miss Graham's position, and all that sort of nonsense. The fact is, I believe, Mr. Stacey, that you think because she is a beautiful girl, and good, and all that, that she is somehow better than you are."

"Well, perhaps, Blanche, you are not far from the mark. I do not feel that in my present circumstances, I ought to ask her to become my wife. She ought not to marry any gentleman with no better prospects in life than I have."

"Nonsense," cried Blanche, evidently losing her patience. "Do you know that it is just such notions as that of yours which makes old maids of the best girls in the country ? A young fellow sees a girl that he fancies, and because he is not as rich as somebody twenty years older than he is, retires from the contest, and lets the poor girl either die an old maid, or marry the old broken-down, worn-out coot, in despair of getting a husband that she can love. Depend upon it, Mr. Harry, that beautiful as Miss Helen Graham is, and good as she is, — and there are none to compare with her, — she must marry somebody of your sex. You are all very much alike, and the best of you are bad enough. Now do you happen to know which of your sex is the best for Miss Graham ?"

"I suppose, Blanche," answered Harry, "that it is the handsomest and the most honorable and intelligent, and one with at least enough of fortune to take care of her."

"Yes, that is part of it," says Blanche ; "but can you think of nothing else ?"

Harry thought of nothing else of much importance.

"Well, I'll tell you what is indispensable in the gentleman Helen Graham is to marry. She must love him ; and if she does that, the other things will be taken for granted. You must not disparage yourself, Mr. Stacey, because you have not now a fortune. What are we all doing in this new and half-civilized country ? Do we come here in pursuit of pleasure ? Of course we do not ; we are here to make our fortunes ; not one of us was either rich or great in our old homes, though some of us are snobbish enough to pretend we were ; had we been, we should have stayed away ; we should have remained with our fortunes like sensible people. We were either without family, or we were poor relations, which is even worse. You stand precisely where all the rest of the gentlemen in the country stood

when they arrived, with this difference, that you have come a little later because you are not as old as the others. Is that an objection in the eyes of a young girl? No, it is all in your favor; the fortune will come to you as it generally comes to all American gentlemen. It comes with the grey hairs and the rheumatic legs, and that will be quite soon enough for it. It is not needed before. When nothing else is left in life worth living for, it is well enough to have money. The girl who is willing to marry an old, decrepid coot of a husband because he has wealth, is welcome to do it; I shall not object, for it is after all an affair of taste. But I will take the young fellow I love, if I can get him, and wait for the money to come with the spectacles, the flannel bandages, and the gout. For in America these three always go together. If you will believe me, Mr. Stacey, though Helen Graham does not speak her mind quite as freely as I do, in her heart she thinks the same way; and so thinks every girl worth having in the whole country. You are going to Washoe; you will see her. Don't come away without telling her in some manner that you love her; you owe this to her at least; no gentleman has the right to love a girl without telling her of it. Her mouth is closed by the rules of society; it is her right to have a declaration as often as she has inspired a passion. The gentleman who from dread of a refusal, or for any reason, withholds from a lady this just due, the privilege of her sex, has defrauded her of one of the debts which her very helplessness ought to have insured the payment of. In sneaking away from his duty, he may fancy that he has escaped a humiliation; but it is a mistake; the disgrace lies in avoiding a plain duty. When an honest man loves, he says so boldly, let the consequence be what it may. And when that is done, he stands forth a nobleman; and if there has been a mistake, it has not been with him at least. When you return, Mr. Stacey, I shall expect to hear a good account of you. Good-by, sir."

"Good-by, Miss Blanche," he answered, and in a half hour he was steaming away upon his journey to Washoe. But he did not go in a hopeful mood. He was still oppressed with the weight of duty that he believed rested upon him with respect to Mr. Graham. He was that gentleman's legal adviser, and was under his pay for attending to that matter. Could he court the daughter under cover of attending to the father's business? That was the question he revolved in his mind. Can I, he demanded of himself, take advantage of his confi-

dence in such a manner? I am travelling in his service and under his employment. The very tickets that I purchased upon the steamboats and stage coaches, will in the end be paid for with his money. What would he think of me? What would Helen think of me? What would I think of myself, if I were capable of turning such a visit to account for my own advancement in my suit with her? Filled with these reflections, he sat down under the after awning and gazed at the receding city, now sinking into the green waters of the bay. He had been so short a time in San Francisco, that he knew but few people, and could not mingle with the crowd of gossiping passengers who strolled about the gangways in groups talking about stocks and politics and drinking cocktails and whiskeys straight. He therefore held himself aloof from them; he had not, however, been sitting long alone, when he was aroused from his reverie by the voice of the captain of the steamer, who saluted him politely, and said that he was delighted to see him on board his boat.

"Good morning, Captain Poole," said Harry; "I am very glad to be with you to-day."

He had known the kind-hearted captain ever since he had been in San Francisco, having made his acquaintance at the Cosmodental Hotel, directly after he had arrived. Harry told him with all the frankness of youth whither he was going and what would be the length of his detention.

"To Washoe!" said the captain; "it is a rough place, I hear. I have never been over there; steamboating keeps a man so close to business that we never get away, not for a minute. I have been going up and down this Sacramento river ever since '49,' without missing a single trip, so you may know I don't go about the country much."

"Your position must grow irksome, captain."

"Oh, no sir; no man can ever get tired of such a beautiful prospect as this," said Captain Poole, pointing enthusiastically at the green shores of the bay, as if they were his own private property. "And then such air, sir;" and here the captain took in a long breath of the wonderful fluid, and let it out again with a loud snort, as if to show his perfect confidence in, and familiarity with the friendly element.

"The finest air in the world, Mr. Stacey; nothing like it on the entire globe. This air, sir, is perfectly pure; it has been analyzed by a famous scientific man up at Mud Springs, in Eldorado county. And do you know it is all pure oxygen? A



fact upon my honor; nothing in it but pure oxygen; no other ingredient whatever, as has been fully demonstrated. That is why you can take so much of it in at a breath." And the captain inhaled such a bellows-ful of it, to show the young lawyer its wonderful quality, that he grew red in the face and was in danger of bursting a blood vessel.

Harry assured him that there could be no longer any doubt of the purity of the San Francisco bay air; and the captain continued:—

"Then again I don't get tired of the business because I know everybody that goes up and down on the boats. Indeed, Mr. Stacey, I know everybody in the country, and if it is not always pleasant, it is generally exciting, and that you know is the next thing to it. The public all travel by my boat, and I get acquainted with everybody worth knowing, besides some that are not."

Here a tall, respectable-looking gentleman came round the gangway towards them.

"How do you do, Snakeweed?" said the Captain. "Mr. Stacey, do you know Mr. Snakeweed?"

Harry had not had that pleasure.

"Gentlemen," continued the captain, "you ought to know each other, being both lawyers. Mr. Snakeweed, Mr. Stacey, Mr. Stacey, Mr. Snakeweed;" and the captain introduced the two gentlemen.

Mr. Snakeweed shook hands warmly with Harry, and said that he was indeed most happy to know the gentleman. Just then somebody passed behind them, to whom Mr. Snakeweed wished to say a word; so, without letting go of Harry's hand, he turned and conversed for a moment with the person passing. While this was going on, the captain drew nearer to Harry and spoke in a confidential tone to him.

"Keep your eye on the old scoundrel," pointing with his finger at Mr. Snakeweed. "Don't let him pick your pocket. You understand me. The fact is, Mr. Stacey, you know that, travelling up and down here since '49, I meet everybody and am expected to introduce them and make people as comfortable as possible. This, of course, I do. Nobody can complain of want of attention on my part. I introduce all without exception. But, when I am obliged to bring about an acquaintance between a stranger, and especially a young man unaccustomed to the ways of the country, and an old son-of-a-gun like this, I always try and drop a word of caution so that he can button up

his coat while he is around. I like to see people happy and sociable, but I don't like to encourage petty larceny on my boat. I don't say as much to you as I would if you were a positive greenhorn. A wink, you know, is as good as a nod to a blind horse. Good evening, sir, I must go on deck to make the Benecia landing and will see you again. Keep your eye skinned. That is all."

"Mr. Stacey," said Mr. Snakeweed, turning to the young man, and still holding on to his hand with a grasp that indicated, if it indicated anything, an affection of many years' standing, "let us take seats."

So they took seats.

"It does me good, always, to make the acquaintance of young members of the bar. I like to take them by the hand and to encourage them. In young lawyers, sir, we veterans of the profession see ourselves repeated. We can look at them with a retrospective glance, and know just what we ourselves were like so many years ago."

Harry was glad, so he said, to be able to afford Mr. Snakeweed so fine an opportunity of looking upon a picture of his early self. He would also have been glad to have been able to free his hand from the grasp of that gentleman, if he could have done so without appearing to be rude, but he omitted to mention this additional wish.

"Have you been long on this coast, Mr. Stacey?"

Harry had not been long, only a few months.

"You have, I trust, finally cast in your lot amongst us. That is, you are going to practice law in San Francisco."

"Yes," Harry said. "Indeed, I have already commenced in a small way."

"Good, good, very good! I am always glad to see young men commence. It shows that when we veterans are shoved off the stage there will be some one left of the right sort to take our places. You are going to Sacramento to attend the Supreme Court, I suppose, Mr. Stacey?"

No, Harry would not stop at the capital. He was on his way to a more distant destination. He was going to Washoe.

"To Washoe?" cried Mr. Snakeweed with a burst of boundless delight, during which he took a renewed and fresh grasp of Harry's hand, just as the poor fellow was in strong hopes of withdrawing it. "To Washoe? Indeed, that is delightful. I am going to the same place myself. Do you go on in the morning?"

Yes, Harry was going on in the morning.

"Then we shall be companions."

Mr. Stacey thanked him.

"Do you go over to look at the country, with an idea of settling there?"

"No, I am going over on business that will detain me but a few days, when I shall return directly."

"Precisely my own case," said Mr. Snakeweed.

Mr. Milchisadek Snakeweed had wandered through all the new territories from Oregon to New Mexico, at times practising as an attorney at the bar, but often turning up in some mysterious way as a judge upon the bench. It was understood that in his career he had been chief-justice of no less than three territories and one State. But, for five years before the commencement of our story, he had been settled down as the San Francisco partner of Mr. Napoleon B. Spelter.



## CHAPTER XV.

### EDUCATION FORMS THE COMMON MIND.

HARRY saw nothing more of his new friend, Mr. Snakeweed, until they reached the part of the route where they took the stage-coach to cross the mountains. Here they again met, and shook hands and congratulated each other upon the successful progress of the journey. The coach was waiting for them at

the terminal station of the railroad, when they came out with their carpet-bags.

"Here we are," cried Mr. Snakeweed, "this is our coach."

It was a clean, comfortable affair, with six horses all prancing, as if anxious to begin the toilsome march. The driver was in his seat, and shouting loudly to hasten the passengers to come forward and take their places. He saw Harry as he crossed the platform.

"This way, colonel," cried the driver. "I knew you were coming, sir, and so saved the seat for you up here with me."

Harry was anxious to ride outside, as it was his first visit to the mountains, and he was naturally desirous of viewing the scenery. But hearing himself invited to ascend by the title of Colonel, he drew back, thinking that perhaps he had been mistaken for another person.

"It is all right, general," cried the driver, still pointing to the vacant place at his side. "I have kept it for you, sir, I have, upon my honor," he continued, seeing Harry still hesitate. "Jump up quick, sir."

Harry ascended and took his place.

"I had a gentleman with me," he said to the driver, "that might perhaps wish to have this other place, if it is not taken already?"

"Who is the gentleman?" was the answer in a loud voice. "Is it old Snakey? That big fellow that came out of the station with you?"

Harry intimated that it was the same.

"He don't want to ride on the box with me; he don't. He always goes inside. The air up here is too fresh for old Snake-weed, he can't stand it."

The coach was now filled, and there being no more passengers, they started away up the mountains at a swinging trot.

Harry was too much interested in his own thoughts during the first few hours to be very communicative, and the driver began to suspect that he had not been very fortunate in the choice he had made of a companion for himself. But towards the middle of the day, as they made their way deeper into the mountain gorges, the two gradually became better acquainted until they seemed like old friends whose intimacy was of years, standing.

Harry soon learned what there was to know of the driver. This from his own lips: "His name was John Gowdy, so he said, though he was better known amongst the gentlemen with whom

he associated as Jack. He was born upon the banks of Buffalo Creek, in the State of Missouri, whither his father had immigrated, some forty years before from North Carolina, very near to the Virginia line. He was a gentleman both by birth and breeding, and his associations had always been with gentlemen like himself. His education had been put in train, as was the custom of the youth of his country, by a trip to New Orleans on the deck of a flatboat. It was true he was not wholly ignorant even before that journey, for he already possessed the accomplishments of chewing tobacco and playing "seven up," or old sledge. These rudimentary acquirements, owing to his own natural aptness, his father at home, with the aid of two elder brothers, had been able to teach the youth without any very considerable difficulty. But the boy, with a foresight beyond his years, even at the early age of eighteen foresaw that he should not be able to make his way in the world by chewing tobacco and the knowledge of a single game of cards alone, more especially if he should ever chance to cast his lot in a country where a variety of games were played, and where "fine cut" should happen to be an expensive luxury. So the New Orleans expedition was planned and executed to add to his culture and to enlarge his views. It was not, taken as a whole (so the driver said in confidence to Harry) a success. For upon his return, though he had slightly added to his already considerable knowledge of swearing, which was perhaps a gain, on the other hand, a valuable lot of coon skins, which had been confided to him by his tender parent to sell in the advantageous market of the Southern metropolis, had been, before he reached that city, entirely frittered away in an ineffectual attempt to add to his imperfect knowledge of cards. This had been done chiefly under the instruction of a strange gentleman who had come on board as a casual visitor at Napoleon, in Arkansas. "Euchre" was the gentleman's game, said the driver, with a grim smile, "and I had never seen it played before; and when the stranger said that in that game the jack took the ace, and pulled out a six-shooter and stuck it right into my face to prove it, I told him that I had no doubt it was all right, but I did not want to play any more at a game where an ace wasn't a better card than a bare-legged jack, and I never have from that day to this. But he took the coon skins and carried them ashore, and that was the last I saw of them."

"What did your father say to you when you got home?" inquired Harry.

"Not much; the old man was always a just man. I told him what the hand was that I held when I bet away the peltry, and he said I did right to bet it; that the hand was a good hand and that I had played it to win. But that, of course, I, a mere boy, could not calculate on the stranger backing his hand up with firearms. The old man believed to the day of his death that I lost the coon skins on the six-shooter, and not on the cards. 'There never was a game played with cards in this world,' said the old gentleman to his three sons, almost on his death-bed, 'where the jack could take the ace if that game was fairly played. But, of course,' said he, 'if firearms are pulled on you then that alters the thing considerably.' The old man was not very wide of the mark on that point. Do you think he was, sir?"

"I should say that the six-shooter would have a material bearing upon the result," answered Harry.

"My father," continued Jack, "was wrong about the cards where he said the jack never takes the ace, but you see, sir, the old man had never travelled."

"What did you do next in the way of adding to your education?" inquired Harry.

"I stayed at home that winter and played poker. But the next year I went to Santa Fé with Frank Aubrey. In fact I made two trips out there. I learned a good deal; but not much that was ever to my advantage. I learned to drink whiskey, more of it than was good for me, and I bucked a little at monte which, you know, is a great game amongst Mexicans, and I learned to go agin' pharo. Then I came home to Old Pike with a long beard hanging down on my breast and my hair over my shoulders. I had a Mexican saddle and leggings, and I had a pair of spurs, as big round as breakfast plates, that jingled on the ground as I walked. And I thought, and everybody else thought, that, next to General Jackson, I was the greatest man that ever lived since the creation of the world."

"No doubt you were a great man, Jack. Why not?"

"Why not! Well, I don't know exactly, unless it was because I could not hold my own. I not only did not know how to earn a livelihood, but I could not keep what little I had brought home with me from New Mexico."

"How was that?" asked Harry.

"Well, sir, when I got back from Santa Fé, I brought a few hundred dollars with me. It was what was left of the money that Aubrey had paid me for helping him across the country

after the pharo and the monte dealers had taken their toll out of it. With that I expected to have a good time generally, staying at home for a year at least."

"Why did you not, Jack?"

"Well, the truth was, sir, that while I had been away in New Mexico, improving myself in foreign and new-fangled games, monte and pharo and a little of euchre and poker as side accomplishments, I had not kept up with the times in old sledge. If you will believe me, sir," and here Jack turned and addressed his passenger as if to impress an important fact upon his mind, "the boys that had never been out of sight of home since they were born beat me out of every red cent I had, in less than three weeks after I got back home. And how do you suppose they did it, sir?"

Harry could not even make a guess at the possible means employed by the youth of the country in this wonderful feat.

"Well, sir, they won the coin playing old sledge with me across the dead logs that lay around in the woods, and in hay lofts and such places. So much for foreign travel, sir," said Jack, in deep disgust at the recollection.

Harry was forced to admit that it had certainly failed to improve Jack in the amusement of his native land.

"You bet your life it failed, sir. There was not an eighteen-year old boy in the country that was not just laying for me till my money was all gone. They quit their regular employment and came down in swarms till they cleaned me out."

"When your money was all gone what did you do? Go to work and earn more?"

"No, I could not do it there. I did not know how. I had no profession nor trade nor any other means of making a living."

"But you still had your spurs and leggings and Mexican saddle. You were almost as great as General Jackson were you not?"

"Yes, I had them. But I was no longer a great man. A gentleman without the means of living is a very fine thing in his way. In those days if he had a Mexican saddle and big spurs, it added a great charm to him. But that was all. It could not alone make him as great a man as old Hickory, at least not till after he had whipped the British or been elected President of the United States. Then it might."

"Well, Jack' inquired Harry, "when you found you could not earn a livelihood in Missouri what did you do?"

"I went back to Santa Fé and bucked at monte a while and drank more "tangle lig." Then I went up to Taos and went again pharo, not forgetting to wrestle with the whiskey every time I got a chance at it, which was about seventy-five times a day. So I worked my way out along the Gila, fighting the Apaches and bad liquors, sometimes getting the best of the savages, but never of the spirits, till I found myself at Los Angeles and so at last came up here."

"How did you come to be a stage-driver, Jack?"

"Well, I could not keep my end up any other way. You know there are some unlucky devils in this world that things never go right with. No matter what they put their hands to they will fail just from misfortune. Well, sir, I am one of that sort. I can't make a living at no game of cards that was ever invented. So I am obliged to have some outside employment so as to raise a stake when I am broke. Now, there is Bob Greathouse and Jack Skaggs, two as elegant gentlemen as ever walked on top of earth. Do you know them, Mr. Stacey?"

Harry regretted to say that he did not.

"More's the pity, for they are gentlemen anybody might be proud to know. Well," continued Jack, "them fellows are lucky. All they ask is a square deal and no favors and that they usually get. Most folks hereabouts think it is not safe to keep them from having it. They can make a good comfortable living without any incidental employment in addition. But I can't do it, I am too unlucky. If I didn't drive stage I would starve to death, or," seeing Harry look incredulously "what is worse, I would be obliged to hang around some four-bit gambling table playing white checks, for I would never have enough money to play like a gentleman. Sir, when I go agin' pharo, I go agin' it as a white man ought to go agin' it. I play red checks twenty dollars at a pop. I am no free nigger, nor mean Yankee, nor New York sneak, to hang about a table betting half dollars on case cards; you bet your life I am not. Am I not right, sir?"

Harry did not understand the matter very thoroughly, but so far as he could, he felt disposed to agree with Jack.

"Of course, I am right. How is the dealer to live if that sneaking game is played on him? Who is to pay for his lights? Where is his rent to come from? Can you tell me?"

Harry could not. He did not know.

"Of course you can't! No gentleman can. My motto is



'live and let live' and that is a gentleman's motto. And when I forget it I want the Apaches to take the hair off my head clean as the bottom of a baby's foot, the same day and early in the forenoon. When I can't play like a gentleman, I shall hand in my checks and quit,\* that's all."

"How did you learn to drive stage? You know you told me that you had no trade, or profession, never having learned any."

"How did I learn to drive horses, sir?" inquired Jack, as if struck by the strangeness of the question. "Why I did not learn at all, I always knew how from the first."

Seeing Harry still waiting as if not understanding it, he continued,—

"I did not have to learn. Driving horses and playing old sledge comes naturally to all Missouri and Arkansas boys. They always know how. Anything else they are obliged to learn at schools, though their education often stops where nature left it."

"Why Jack, is not education general in your country?"

"Some sorts is, sir, but not book-learning. I used to know how to read a little, but writing was always too much for me I never took to it."

"Why was that; did you not have schools?"

"Yes, sometimes, but they were too uncertain to do much good in my day. We had to do so much tarring and feathering."

"What do you mean by that, Jack?"

"You see, sir, schoolmasters are always Yankees. I never knew just why it happens to be so, but they are. Maybe its because the business is so sneaking that nobody else wants to follow it. Yankees, you know, are always crazy about what they call the cause of education and such trash. They want to educate everything they get their hands on, from niggers up to dogs and white people. Well, sir, on account of this Yankee peculiarity, we could never keep a school going more than two or three months at a time, before we would find out that the teacher was so anxious to spread education, that the little niggers would begin to know their a b c's. They would be teaching them of nights, sir."

\* In betting at the game of pharo, the player uses ivory counters called "checks." These are surrendered or handed in to the dealer when the game closes, or when the player leaves off betting. In the far west "to hand in checks" is a familiar way of expressing our intended yielding up or surrender.

"Well, what of that?" asked Harry, innocently.

"What of it!" cried Jack, in amazement, "enough of it. The school would come to a sudden end. The teacher would find himself in a coat of tar and feathers, and being rowed across the Mississippi river. And he would be in mighty big luck, I can tell you, if the canoe did not upset with him, before he got to the other side. After that, we generally would have a good deal of trouble in finding another teacher, and maybe the school would be shut up a whole year till the scholars had forgotten all they had learned in the first one."

"Now I understand it," said Harry.

"Understand it; of course you do. It is simple enough," said Jack; "anybody can understand it. Everybody knows what a Yankee schoolmaster is without having to be told. They are the meanest, sneakiest, most meddlesome creatures in the world. And they are never satisfied with anything. I never just happened to kill one, because I am a goodnatured man and don't like to kill anybody unless they do me a personal wrong. But I have had a good deal of provocation from Yankee schoolmasters in my time, and wonder I have not killed a score of them before now. Do you know they are all abolitionists, sir?"

"Are they indeed?" asked Harry.

"Every one, sir, to my positive knowledge. There never was an exception. And the women are if possible worse than the men. Have you not found them so?"

Harry thought his observation tallied much with Jack's.

"Well, sir, education if it is to be obtained at the price of association with such people, is better dispensed with. Those are my sentiments, sir, and they are the sentiments of every gentleman that I have talked with, that was not a free nigger, mean Yankee, or a sneak. Don't you think so, sir?"

Harry had never thought much upon the subject.

"I know I am right," continued Jack. "I can drive horses, and I can play a pretty good game of old sledge, if the cards are fairly dealt; and I can read a little, if the print is plain. It is not as much education quite as I should like to have. I would like to be able to write and to cipher. But I have never felt the need of them enough to be willing to do anything unbecoming of a gentleman, to learn how. And I call associating with abolitionists, and black republicans, and free niggers, and such Yankee sneaks, upon terms of equality, as things unbe-

coming in a gentleman. Have you many abolitionists about where you come from, sir?"

"Yes, a good many," answered Harry; "but they don't trouble us much."

"I suppose they have gone off to the war, now; have they not, sir?"

"Yes; a great many have; but there are still some left."

"Have you ever tried tar and feathers on them, sir?"

Harry had never known of that stringent remedy being applied to the evil.

"It is splendid," said Jack; "it is not so satisfactory as hanging, sir; but it is better, in the long run, for it don't make such a row. I never saw any thing so good as tar and feathers for abolitionists. Only," he added, thoughtfully, "I don't like to see it applied to women; and, what is more, I never did see it done, neither; though I have heard of it in other places, and that may have been a black republican lie, you know. A woman, sir, is a woman; I don't care where she comes from, nor what she is. Even if she is a Yankee schoolma'am, it is not her fault; she can't help it! And she is only the more to be pitied, even if she happens to be a abolitionist, as they all are. Of course they must be made to leave the country, as soon as they are found out. That is a necessity; but that is all. No man ever raises his hands, with impunity, against a woman, in Jack Gowdy's presence. You bet your life, at least, while he has his tools with him, any how; if he does, he'll hear from Jack as a gentleman should be heard from, damned quick. Excuse me for the oath, in your presence, sir; for I know what is due from one gentleman to another, as well as any man that ever walked on top of the earth."

Harry excused the oath, and commended the sentiment that had called it forth.

"You say many of them have gone off to the army," continued Jack; "I wonder you don't go for the rascals that remain behind. It would be a good time to get rid of the whole breed at once. The southern army will take care of those who come their way; and if the gentlemen in the North would only attend to their end of the line, the whole breed would be cleared out directly."

Harry said that they had peculiar notions in his part of the country, about such things. Folks would not be tarred and feathered there, no matter how much they might deserve such treatment.

"What part of the country might you come from, Mr. Stacey?" inquired Jack, who had long since learned his passenger's name.

"From Ohio," answered Harry.

"Oh! then you are a Yankee, yourself," cried Jack.

"I do not know just what you consider a Yankee," answered Harry.

"Well, anybody from up your way; but we divide them up, you know, into classes. There are the Michigan Yankees, and the Ohio Yankees. But the most of the Yankees come from New York. Then there is another sort, called the blue-bellied Yankees, that come from somewhere further off; I don't know exactly where. They are the worst kind; they are most all schoolmasters and preachers, and they say they are all abolitionists without exception. But about that, I don't know, positively; and when I don't know a thing for certain, I don't like to circulate it, for it may prove to be a slander."

Harry agreed in the justice of the reservation.

"There is nothing very bad about an Ohio Yankee," said Jack, with an evident desire to help his new friend out of a position that was clearly more his misfortune than his fault.

"Were you born in Ohio?" he asked.

"Yes;" said Harry, "I was born there."

"What business do you pretend to follow?"

"I am a lawyer," answered Harry.

"Lawyer!" cried Jack, with an accent that betrayed a strong suspicion on his part that he was riding with an improper character.

"Don't you like lawyers, Jack?" asked Harry.

"Well, I have seen people that I liked better, and I have seen people that I didn't like so well. For instance, there is preachers, especially Methodist preachers. I tell you, Mr. Stacey, preachers is chain lightning. But there are good and bad of all sorts, you know."

"What is your objection to preachers, Jack?"

"Nothing special, except their luck; they are the luckiest men in the world. There is no use trying to go agin' 'em. If you hold four aces, and a Methodist preacher raises you, you don't dare to call him; if you do, you are gone certain; for he is sure to have a straight flush, with a six-shooter to back it up, if it is necessary; and he will rake the board every time. They are the worst men in the deck to play agin'."

"Is that your objection to lawyers, Jack?"

"No, sir ; lawyers seldom play cards. They are too smart to bet on anything so uncertain. They don't take chances, they don't. They can make money easier, by stealing it square out. We have one aboard here, now, sir, that's some on the steal," and Jack pointed his whip down at the door of the coach, and looked hard at Harry to see if he understood the allusion. Seeing he did not, he continued, "Old Snakey."

"You mean Mr. Snakeweed, Jack, I suppose."

"You bet your life I don't mean anybody else but him. Anything that he won't steal must be red-hot, and it must weigh over five hundred pounds. And," continued Jack, in a confidential undertone, "if you are going to leave any property of that sort around that you don't want to have change hands, you had better take care that there is not a pair of tongs within twenty miles of the place. For if you do, Old Snakey will get away with it sure."

"You don't seem to like Mr. Snakeweed, Jack."

"I haven't nothing special against him, except that he will steal."

Harry, of course, understood that Jack's language applied to the general dishonest character of Mr. Snakeweed, and not that he was actually guilty of technical theft.

"What has he done to you, Jack, that makes you so severe upon him?"

"Oh, nothing, sir, except that I know him ; that is all."

At this moment the station for changing horses came in view, and with a loud cracking of whips, followed by an additional tug, the wearied horses galloped up to the stable.

"Look sharp, there, boy," cried Jack, "and put these horses to the coach, quick ; for I am already behind time. Don't go to sleep now in your tracks, do you hear?"

The boy worked as fast as he could ; so Harry thought and suggested to Jack. But he was told that his scolding was only a matter of form, to keep the boys from falling into the erroneous notion that he (Jack) was a sardine, to be chucked about at pleasure. A status that it appeared required the utmost watchfulness to avoid acquiring.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## JACK GOWDY BUYS MINING SHARES.

WHEN the horses had been put to the coach, and they were again rattling along the road, Harry reminded Jack of what he had said before stopping, about Mr. Melchisedec Snakeweed.

"I remarked, Jack, that you did not appear to be fond of him. I am curious to know what is the cause of your special dislike to that gentleman."

✓ "Well, I have nothing especial against him except that I know him. I think that is my most serious cause of dislike to old Snakey. If I did not know him, I suppose I should like him well enough."

This, Jack said with an air of moderation, as if to smooth away his former decided hostility. But, observing that Harry did not appear satisfied with the explanation, Jack continued, —

"You, no doubt, observed, Mr. Stacey, that the old scoundrel rides on the inside of the coach and takes all of the dust instead of sitting out here with me like a gentleman. Perhaps you, being a stranger and unacquainted with our customs, may think that he does that because he likes it. But when you travel over this road a few times, you will find out different. If you will just listen to me half a minute, I will tell you why he rides in there."

Harry said he would be glad to know why it was so.

"Have you got any tobacco?" asked Jack.

Harry had none. He never had learned to use it.

"Lucky thing for you, sir. Hold the lines while I get some out of my inside pocket."

Harry took the lines while Jack unbuttoned his coat and filled his mouth with "fine cut."

"It is a beastly habit; but you can't drive stage without it, especially along these narrow grades where it is dangerous to drink whiskey. It is company for you, and besides, where you can't have your regular corn-juice, as is the case on these grades, it helps keep your nerves steady."

Harry said that he would learn if he ever turned stage-driver.

"I would recommend you to do it in that case only, sir."

Well, as I was going to say, old Snakeweed has travelled back and forth between Sacramento and the mines, off and on, ever since I have been driving stage over these mountains. I knew he was a lawyer, and as lawyers usually pretend to call themselves gentlemen, I took him to be a gentleman and treated him as such. Of course, when he rode with me I gave him a good seat and conversed with him freely and friendly as one gentleman should converse with another. One morning, about a year ago (I was driving for the McSweenys on the other road then), when, just before I started off from Virginia on the down trip, who should walk up with his carpet-bag, but that old thief inside. 'Good morning, Jack,' says he. 'Good morning, Mr. Snakeweed,' says I, as polite as I knew how to be. 'Got a place for a gentleman up there?' he says. 'Yes,' says I, 'I always have a place for a gentleman up here. No other kind ever rides on the box with Jack Gowdy if he knows it.' 'All right' says he, 'that's nice,' and he flung his carpet-bag under the box at my feet and mounted up. There happened that day, as it has to-day, that only one other gentleman came along that I thought just the thing to ride with me. You know how it is, Mr. Stacey, when a gentleman is driving a stage over a long road, he don't want to be forced for a whole day and a night into the society of a lot of common scrubs, and Yankees, and free niggers, and preachers, and such trash, simply because they happen to have money enough to buy a ticket on this stage. Gentlemen naturally want to be together, and it is only reasonable to suppose that all sorts of sneaks feel the same disposition to associate with each other. It is no more pleasure for such people to be with me than it is for me to be with them. There ain't nothing congenial between us. Well, that day, I had put the people inside as well as I could, and Old Snakeweed and I had it all to ourselves on the box. I noticed from the time we started out of Virginia that he was awful pleasant and kind to me. He did not seem to know how to say enough sweet things. He asked me all sorts of questions about myself. Where I came from, and what brought me to this country. Well, I told him just as I have told you to-day. I did not have any secret to keep. My father was an old North Carolina gentleman before me that lived close to the Virginia line; and I am as good a gentleman as ever lived on top of the earth though I do say it myself. But old Snakeweed seemed to be anxious about me. He liked me so well that he was sorry to see me driving stage. I told

him that that was not a business to be ashamed of; that any gentleman might be glad to follow it. He said, yes, he was aware of it, but that it was a dangerous business; that there were so many accidents. Well, I could not deny that, for if it is well followed up it can scarcely be called a safe calling. So I told him that I could not call it as safe a business as being a Cumberland Presbyterian preacher in Missouri. Well, that was his point, and he could not see how a young man of my talent and appearance could willingly follow this dangerous, narrow-grade road, day and night for years, and take the chances of running over the bank each time I made a trip. 'Because I can't do no better,' says I. 'If I should give up stage-driving, I would starve to death or something like that. I would be a white-cheek man the balance of my days.' 'No, you would not,' says he; 'why look at these splendid mines that you drive over every day of your life, teeming with untold argentiferous wealth.' I remember those were precisely his words. 'It is a pity to see a young man neglecting his opportunities when, by investing a few dollars of his surplus funds, he might in a few months be able to retire upon his independent income, the earnings of his mine, and quit such a dangerous occupation.' I was rather pleased with the idea, for I thought what a splendid run I could make agin' Jack Skagg's pharo bank with plenty of money and nothing else to do. 'But,' said I, 'I don't know anything about such things. Long as I have driven stage over these mountains, I don't know neither silver nor gold when I see them unless they have the eagle-bird of America stamped on one side.' 'Precisely so,' said he, 'but that is no reason why you should not take advantage of what is going on around you. A man cannot expect to know everything. No man knows that. You must place confidence in somebody. You must trust to others in such things as you don't know yourself, and then you are all right. 'I don't know how to drive stage,' says he, 'but I don't stay at home on that account. I trust you. That is confidence. And you see I come out all right.' 'Yes,' said I, 'that sounds well enough. It suits me; but who shall I trust? What shall I do? That is the very difficulty. I never know of any investments for money except whiskey and tobacco and such like necessary things.' 'Of course you don't,' says he, 'because that is not your calling. You are a stage-driver. Finding investments for coin is a regular profession. You must trust to somebody else in such matters.' Then he told me how often he found the nicest young people in the whole



country in precisely the same situation that I was in, and how often he had come to their assistance with his advice and experience. He had only that very week made investments for his cook and for his coachman, both comparatively poor people, so he said, that would in less than a year, enable them to travel in Europe as ladies and gentlemen, on the interest of their money."

" 'How was that?' said I.

" 'Selling mining stocks,' says he. 'I happen to have means of knowing which mines are going to be good and which are going to be bad; and so just out of natural kindness, and a feeling that I always had for poor people, I let them into the secret, and now they are in such circumstances that they need not cook or drive carriage for another day.'

" 'Have they quit?' says I.

" 'No,' said he, 'they have kept on. But they only do it for amusement; they have been so long at it they do not like to quit off so sudden. The force of habit is wonderful. Now,' says he, 'if I do all that for a lot of menial servants, don't it look reasonable that I would do as much for a gentleman.'

" 'Well,' says I, 'I should say it did.'

" 'Then he went on to tell me how he had made these people's fortunes. 'There were two mines,' so he said, 'in Washoe, that everybody supposed were not worth two second-hand chews of tobacco. One was a mine called the 'Queen of Spades,' and the other was the 'Slumgullion.'

" 'Now,' says old Snakeweed, 'you ask any man in the Territory, except myself, about them mines, and they will tell you that they are two "dead beats." That there is not a grain of silver ore in a thousand feet of either of them, go what way you will. But ask me, and what do I say about it? Well, I say this, that they are the very mines that have made the fortunes of my household domestic servants. It is upon the proceeds of them two mines that they, within six months from to-day, will be travelling in Europe like gentlemen and ladies. Why,' says he, 'Mr. Gowdy, if you will take my word, and it was never broken to living creature, I can go into either of them two mines with a hammer and a cold chisel, and cut out enough pure silver in one day to make me a rich man. It is there in sight, sir. I have been down and seen it myself with these very eyes since I was on this trip.'

" 'I began to take a great interest in what he said by this time. Especially when he told me about selling the stock to his own cook. Certainly no gentleman that ever lived would sell sil-

✓ ver stock to his domestic servants unless the stock was worth all he represented it to be. Well, sir, to make a long story short, it turned out by a rare piece of good luck, a mere accident, so he said, that he had fifty shares of each of them mines in his pocket at that minute. Well, I happened to have a check for seven hundred dollars in my pocket on Mills' bank, and so the trade was soon made. I fancied the Queen of Spades the best, for it looked a little like going against pharo, where, you know, there is always some show for your money if you get a square deal. But old Snakeweed said the mines were side by side, and that one being just as good as the other it would be a pity to divide them. 'Never take two bites at a cherry,' says he. I had not quite enough money to pay for all the stock; but he said that need not trouble me the least in the world. I could pay him the odd fifty dollars whenever I had it. 'And for that matter,' says he, 'between gentlemen that way it don't make any great matter if you never do pay it.' But I told him no, I never did business that way, and that the first time I saw him to speak to him, he might expect the balance of the coin."

"Well, Mr. Stacey," said Jack, looking at him attentively as if to watch the effect of his discourse, "do you know that there was not an indication of silver ore in either of these mines. Do you know what is more," he continued, still looking at Harry, "that he had never been on the ground where he claimed his lode to be, in the course of his sneaking, thieving life. And do you know, that he not only had never been down in them mines to cut pure silver with a cold chisel, but that there had never been a hole dug in the ground within a mile of the mines big enough to hide a pup possum!"

✓ "Mr. Stacey," said Jack, slowly, seeing that Harry still did not seem to understand the enormity of the offence of Mr. Snakeweed, "there were no such mines in Washoe Territory as what he had printed on them certificates of stock. The Queen of Spades can't be found, and the Slumgullion can't be found. They don't exist."

Harry expressed his surprise that any man could act in so wicked a manner, thereby robbing Jack of his money.

"Oh, as for the money, I did not care anything about that. I don't consider that I lost it."

"How was that?" asked Harry.

"Well, the money, sir, was money that I had won from Jack Skagg's pharo game, the last trip down; and, as I was on my

way back it was more than seven to one that I would have left it with Jack again. So you see, sir, I consider that Jack Skaggs lost the money. And so does he ; for when I told him about it he did not like it a bit, and swore vengeance on Snake-weed.

"When I got into Sacramento, I drove up to Bill Hunt's door. Do you know Bill Hunt, Mr. Stacey?"

No, Harry did not know him. He had never been in Sacramento until that morning.

"Well, you ought to know him. You would like him, and he would like you, I know from your look. He is the most elegant gentleman that walks on the top of the earth without exception. He keeps the French Hotel, and it is the finest hotel in the world, and he has more learning than any man that ever I saw, except General Jackson, and they say he is dead."

Harry expressed a strong desire to see and make the acquaintance of the polished and erudite hotel-keeper.

"Indeed, sir, I don't wonder at it," said Jack. "You just ought to see him go against pharo with red checks, if it was only for once. It would be such a beautiful sight, you would never forget it. If you stop at his house when you go back, and it is the only decent hotel in the town, don't fail to tell him that Jack Gowdy sent you. That is all. You will be treated like a prince from that minute."

Harry said that he would be sure to call and make the acquaintance of Bill Hunt. And Jack continued, —

"As I said before, I drove up to Bill Hunt's door with old Snakey still on the box at my side. I threw the lines to a boy, and got down and went in to get my supper. I thought Bill looked at me with a queer sort of an expression that was not just the usual way he looked when I got in from across the mountains. But I did not say anything just then. I waited till after supper to speak to him. Then I goes up to the bar, and says I, 'Billy,' for that's what I always call him, we are such friends, you know, 'Billy, go with me to the theatre to night?' He did not answer the question at first, so thinking he did not hear me, I repeated the question."

"Billy — Bill ! Will you go to the theatre to-night?"

Bill looked over the counter at me then, as if he had just seen me for the first time.

"'No,' says he, 'I won't.'"

"'Why won't you?' says I."

“‘Because you are not going,’ says he.

“‘Not going,’ says I. ‘Why am I not going? Did I not just ask you to go with me? Is it the custom for one gentleman to invite another to go to the theatre with him and then not go? Where were you fetched up?’

“‘It don’t make no difference where I was fetched up.’

“‘You don’t go to no theatre to-night,’ says Bill.

“‘Why?’ says I.

“‘Because you have’nt got no money to go with. It takes coin to get into theatres in this country; people can’t afford to keep ’em open for nothing; a theatre is not like a hotel where everybody expects to come and eat and drink, and go away without leaving a red cent.’

“It went all through me like a shot that I had no money that night. Old Snakeweed had got my last picayune, coming down for the Queen of Spades stock.”

“‘How do you know I have no money?’ says I.’

“Bill looked at me hard for a minute, then says he, ‘Did not that tall, respectable, honest-looking old gentleman ride on the box all the way over with you?’

“Says I, ‘Yes, what of that?’

“‘Well, that is “Old Snakeweed,” the San Francisco lawyer, and he never was in company with anybody over half an hour in his life, without squeezing him as dry as a sponge; why, he goes through ’em just like a dose of salts. Jack Gowdy, I’ll bet you a thousand dollars to a paper of “fine cut,” that you haven’t got a red cent, and we will turn your pockets out here on the counter and see.’

“Well, I had to own up, for it was true. But I thought old Bill Hunt would die of laughing when I told him about it. He rolled all round the room, and held his sides saying that they ached so. ‘Well, says I, ‘I don’t care, it was Jack Skagg’s money any way. Well, Bill took me to the theatre that night, Mr. Stacey. Bill Hunt is the smartest man in the world. Don’t you think so, sir?’

Harry admitted that Jack had made out a strong case upon that side of the question.

“But Jack, did you never make any effort to obtain justice?”

“Not yet, but I may get back on him some time.”

“By a lawsuit, I suppose,” suggested Harry.

“By a what?” cried Jack, turning and regarding his passenger with a look that indicated a mixture of amazement with a strong sense of the ludicrous. “By a lawsuit,” he continued in

the midst of a burst of boisterous laughter; "that would be a good joke."

The very idea of his having a lawsuit seemed to Jack so supremely funny, that he could not restrain his merriment for some time; at last he settled down again and pulling up his lines, he cracked his whip at the leaders till they were galloping along handsomely, when he resumed his answer.

"No, Mr. Stacey, not by a lawsuit; that is no doubt a very nice thing for a San Francisco gentleman, who has plenty of coin and nothing to do but sit back in his office, and attend to it and enjoy himself; but a Washoe stage driver has about as much business with a lawsuit, as he has with keeping a sausage factory at some place five hundred miles away from his route; and it would get along about as well; that is not my idea of obtaining justice; I have very strong doubts, Mr. Stacey, about ever getting even with the old scoundrel in this world; in the next, I do not feel quite so uncertain; but if I ever get a square pull at him, I will mighty nearly come up with him on this side of Jordan you bet your life."

"How?" inquires Harry.

"If I ever should meet with the good luck to have him go over this road as the only solitary passenger in my coach, a thing that is not likely to happen, though it is on the cards;" here he turned to Harry to show how in earnest he was, "I'll throw him over the bank."

"And kill him," cries the astonished passenger.

Jack renewed his tobacco with great deliberation, first throwing away the old quid.

"It is a thousand feet at the shallowest part, going from Lake Bigler down; he will be mighty apt to get a good jolt, when he touches ground at the bottom; yes, sir, if I can get my hands on the old scoundrel when there is nobody about he won't send any more cooks travelling in Europe on their income after that. I'll do it as a Christian duty. I'll just drop him off at the steepest place on the Carson grade; his friends will know the spot, by seeing the buzzards circling around it."

"But if you do that, Jack, you will get yourself into trouble, will you not?"

"Trouble!" cried Jack, with a contemptuous sneer. "No I'll get right into ease and comfort. I'll be like a blind mustang in a clover-patch. Bill Hunt has a standing offer, when I kill the old thief, to hide me in his house gratis for a year and a

day, and board me on the best his table affords. Did you ever eat in Bill Hunt's house?"

"No, Jack, I never have."

"Well, then, just try it once, sir, and see if it's trouble; and besides, Jack Skaggs has an account to settle with old Snakey, and he has promised to let me play red checks at his game on credit, as long as I am hiding away, and till he can run me off into Arizona, or some decent place where there ain't so much prejudice as there is here. I won't be in a hurry to leave; do you think I will, sir?"

"No," said Harry, "I do not think you will find a place more to your mind than your friend Mr. Hunt's house upon those terms."

"I should say not," said Jack.

"Have you ever paid Mr. Snakeweed the balance on your shares, Jack?"

"No, for he has never asked me for the money; he don't seem to remember me at all; he comes up and gets inside the coach without ever appearing to recollect anything about me.

It was far in the night when they passed down the Carson grade; but the novelty of the situation kept Harry awake, and the two still conversed upon such topics as came uppermost. The narrow and dangerous grade had already lost a good part of its terrors to the young man's mind by the few hours of habit in facing it. They had wound along equally, and even more fearful precipices, upon the banks of the American river in the early part of their journey.

"If it was day-light," said Jack, "from where we are now, I could show you the Carson river and the valley. Most passengers think the scenery on this part of the road very fine; and I often stop just at this point, if I have any women with me, or any real gentlemen, like ourselves, that want to take a look at it for a few minutes."

Harry was very sorry that it was not day light, as he would enjoy the view above all things.

"You will get a good chance as you come back, for then you will pass here in the afternoon. Just at the point where we are now coming to, we had a rough time last Wednesday, a week ago, with some Indians."

"Indeed?" asked Harry; "what was it that happened?"

Jack told him about an ambush that had been laid for the coach, by the savages, and the effort that had been made to

throw them all over the bank. It is needless to say that it was the affair which we have described in a former chapter.

Jack went on, in his own peculiar way, to detail the particulars of the attempt upon their lives, as it has already been told to the reader. Harry soon learned that it was Mr Graham and his family who had so narrowly escaped with their lives, and he listened with breathless attention. And when Jack reached the point where the savage had risen up from behind the log to fire at Greathouse, he could not await the slow conclusion of the story, as Jack, with great gravity, was telling it, chewing tobacco all the while, but burst into a demand to be informed at once if they had reached home in safety, before he would allow Jack to go on with the story.

"Reached home in safety?" answered Jack, as if the question was, in itself, almost too intrinsically absurd to be worthy of a reply. "I should say so; my passengers generally come through in safety. But seeing Harry still looking anxiously at him, he added, "Oh yes, they are all at the hotel in Virginia at this minute, as safe as so many coons in a gum tree, with not an axe nor a dog in fifty miles."

Harry was satisfied, and Jack, having renewed his tobacco, went on with the story. While he was in the midst of the discussion they reached the place where the log had rested against the bank.

"Just here we would have gone over," said Jack, "but it is too dark for you to see how far we would have gone down before we would have been in condition to have been picked up."

Harry leaned over, and peered down into the abyss below, but all was black as the lowest depths of Erebus, and he could see nothing.

"We did not go over," said Jack, "and I am not sorry for it, for I did not want to go a bit. There was an Indian went over, and I think he must like it, for he is down there yet, judging from the flock of buzzards I saw gathering down there, as I came up last trip to—"

"Where are the other Indians?" asked Harry.

"They cleared out directly that we got by, for they knew it would not be safe for them to stay any longer after we took the word into Carson, which is not eight miles from here, down the mountain. They did not even stop to pick up the fellow that Bob tossed over the bank. They were in too much of a hurry for that. Do you know, sir, that that yellow-haired gall came

out like a brick? I never saw nor heard anything like it in all my experience."

"What did she do?" asked Harry.

Then Jack explained to him how she had seen the whole affair, and from fear of alarming her mother, had sat and never given a sign or token of the danger.

"That is just like Helen," cried Harry, in a burst of enthusiasm.

"Then you know the young woman?" suggested Jack.

"Yes, I know the whole family, and have been acquainted with them for several months."

Then you know as pretty a piece of female flesh as ever trod shoe-leather," said Jack, in delight at seeing that his new friend was acquainted with the paragon of female excellence. That's all I have to say. Do you know her well, sir?

Seeing Harry hesitate, as if in doubt how to answer this question, Jack continued, —

"Because, if you do you are dead in love with her, and I will bet more on it than I would on four aces, if I was surrounded with friends, and had a loaded six-shooter, ready capped and cocked, in my hand to back 'em."

Had it been daylight, poor Harry's secret would have been lost then and there. But a friendly darkness curtained his blushes, and Jack, not knowing how central had been his aim, continued, —

"She is the finest girl that ever wore garters, and I am so dead in love with her that I am nearly stone blind after four o'clock. But understand me," he said, "I don't mean by that that I am after the lady, or even dream that she thinks or could think of poor Jack. She is too good for a drunken, gambling, ignorant stage-driver, as I call myself, knowing it to be true, but as I would take the top of any man's head clean off that would say it about me, nevertheless. But she is not for my sort of men. Not that I am not good enough a gentleman to be her equal, or anybody else's equal, for that matter, for I am as much of a gentleman, and know as well how to conduct myself like a gentleman, when I want to try, as any man, white or black, that walks on the top of the earth. But," and he continued with his explanation to Harry, "she is not for my sort, and I know it. No woman is for me, and especially such a beautiful lady as that. I only say this to you, Mr. Stacey, not because, ordinarily, it would be necessary, but because I happened to mention to you that I was in love with her, which I am. Habit-



ually, when a man, no matter who he is, says that he is in love with a woman, the inference follows that he wishes, and perhaps expects her to love him again in turn, and so, to put that quite back where it belongs, I have made these remarks. I love her as you would love a beautiful queen, or somebody like that, that was clear away out of your reach."

Harry told him that he understood the sentiment, and respected it.

"Thank you," said Jack with a tone of earnest gratitude. "I am much obliged to you for your kindness. You see, sir, I would go plump into hell for that lady, if it would be of any benefit to her in the world. But as for marrying anybody, even that I could get to have me, I would not do it, for if I had the most beautiful wife in the world, I could not keep her six months."

"Oh," cried Harry, "I am sure you could."

"No," said Jack, persistently. "She would either starve to death, or I would bet her away at pharo. She would go some-way. I would lose her, for I lose everything I have. You see, my luck is so bad. You don't know what an unlucky man I am, sir; I am sure you don't."

Harry was sorry to hear that Jack was so unlucky, and hoped his luck would change. Jack thanked him.

"I am sorry that I had to talk to you so about this beautiful young woman, but having once said I loved her, I could not do less than explain how, and to say, in fact, what I have said."

Harry assured him that he fully appreciated the delicacy of the motive that had caused both the declaration and the explanation that followed it.

"But you," cried Jack, "are different. I have never seen a man in all my travels over these mountains, that came up to my idea of the man that was just good enough, and gentlemanly enough, and educated enough, to be a husband to that beautiful, golden-haired lady, as just you, sir, though I never laid eyes on you till this morning, or rather yesterday morning, for it is now past midnight."

Harry protested that Jack was too kind towards him.

"No, I am not, sir; not a whit. I mean just what I say, and if you are not in love with her, just take Jack Gowdy's advice for once in your life, and go and fall in love with her as soon as you can, and marry her, for she is the queen of this world; that she is, sir, and somebody is going to gobble her up, like a plate of hot buckwheat cakes with sugar-tree molasses on them, and

that, too, within a year. And if you don't look out it will be done right under your eyes, before you know it. It does not make much difference to me, sir, in the long run, for the Lord only knows where I will be in a year from now. Over the bank as likely as not, or, may be worse, broiling in a green-wood fire, with a hundred Apaches howling and dancing round me. But such a woman as I know that to be, is not picked up in this sage-brush country every day. Now you just take Jack Gowdy's word, that has been driving stage over here ever since the thing commenced, for that, will you?"

Harry could not dispute the justice of Jack's observations on this point. In fact he said he was sure his new friend was right. "But," continued he, "I have told you what I am doing in this country, Jack. I have told you about the mortgage in the old home, and how it came to be there. Could I forget what I owe to my father and my mother, and marry a lady whose support will draw a penny from the sacred fund that I am trying to collect together to pay off that debt."

Poor Harry! his heart was so full of the matter that he was ready to pour it all out before the stage-driver, and ask his sympathy. But Jack would not listen to that as a serious obstacle.

"You don't know," he cried, "what a country this is for making money in. And, besides, that gal will never be a drag upon any man. She will help him, sir; she will comfort him, encourage him, and lay her hand to the work. Oh, sir, she is no drone, believe me, Mr. Stacey." Jack thought he was only defending his beauty from an unjust suspicion, and not that he was talking to one who was already only wanting a word of encouragement to declare to Helen his passion, fierce as burning words could describe it. "I do assure you, Mr. Stacey, there was never so beautiful, so sweet, or so true a woman as that. I don't know, of course, how you may be situated. You may be already engaged, or committed in some way, to somebody, so that, as a gentleman, you cannot look at anybody else. But if you are heart-free, then I say to you, here is your chance, and you must strike quick, for women are not plenty in this country, and such a one as that is not going to be left on the old-maids' list anywhere, especially in Washoe."

Here they halted at the station at Carson, to change horses and take breakfast. At the table, Mr. Snakeweed seemed to avoid Harry, as if not wanting to be recognized at that time. The young man suspected that it was his long ride with Jack Gowdy that had rendered the lawyer uneasy as to its result, and

he consequently did not want to resume the acquaintance at that moment. It was towards the middle of the afternoon when they drove up to the door of the American Eagle hotel, and Harry, bidding Jack good morning, entered the house to obtain rest and refreshment.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

MR. NAPOLEON B. SPELTER.

HARRY presented himself at the office of his client, Mr. Graham, directly that he had removed the dust from his travel-soiled clothes, and put himself in presentable condition.

"I will not call upon him at his apartments," he thought, "at least not without an express invitation from him to that effect. I cannot take advantage of my professional employment to pay my suit to his daughter."

Mr. Graham seized him warmly by the hand and greeted him cordially. His reception ought to have put him at ease with respect to that gentleman's notions. He could not have been received more cordially had he already been the son of Helen's father.

"Have you seen the ladies at No. 16?" was almost his first question.

"No."

"Why did you not look in upon them, if only for a moment? You come directly from their friends at the Bay, and must have oceans of news that would please them; and, besides, you are such a favorite with my wife that I am sure you would have been most welcome under any circumstances."

Harry had felt, so he said, that the business upon which he had come to the Territory required his first attention, and until that was put in process of being attended to, he could think of nothing else.

"I am much obliged to you for your zeal in my service," said Mr. Graham, "and will not forget it. Then we will talk about the suit of the Bosh Company *versus* Graham, and when

that is all disposed of, I am sure you will not forget that you have friends in my apartments whom you are not to slight."

So they commenced at once to discuss the lawsuit. Harry asked the history of the mine from the moment it had been suspected that Mount Davidson concealed a silver lode down to the day he stood in Mr. Graham's office. This history he obtained truthfully from Mr. Graham. When he was in doubt, he questioned and cross-questioned his client upon the most minute particulars.

The land being the land of the United States, and all miners holding possession by mere tacit consent of the Government, but which consent, till revoked, was recognized by the courts as conferring a valid title, it followed that the first discoverer and possessor of any part of it, if he had not, in any manner, voluntarily abandoned his right, was, in law, to all intents and purposes the owner.

No one had a better title than he, except the United States Government, and the United States Government had established a policy, true, not by positive legislation, but by abstention from it, of non-interference, leaving the mines virtually to the first occupant.

The whole title, therefore, rested, not upon paper or in matter of record, but upon questions of fact depending for their establishment upon the recollections, or the honesty of witnesses.

Harry was amazed when he learned upon what a slender thread the fortune of his friend and client was suspended.

After several hours spent in carefully examining the facts of the early history of the mine, and the connection of Mr. Graham with it, he arrived at the opinion that his title was as good as any such title could be.

"But," said he, "the goodness of any title in this Territory must depend largely, almost entirely, upon the integrity of your judicial tribunals, the high and pure character of the bar from whence the judges must be chosen, and, lastly, the power of public opinion bearing directly upon these important subjects. I take it for granted, Mr. Graham, that you have confidence in your courts, that they are above and beyond being influenced by any sort of improper motives."

Mr. Graham was really unable to answer that question. He had heard hints thrown out that all was not quite as it should be in that direction. But he had never been assailed in his

rights before, and had not, he confessed, given the matter so much thought as perhaps he ought to have done."

"Possibly, Mr. Graham, the fact of your ill success in searching for the silver vein hitherto has kept you free from attack. You may not have been deemed worth fighting."

"That is no doubt the truth, Mr. Stacey. I see it plainly enough, now, but I had never looked on it in that light before ; indeed, sir, I have been too much occupied with my financial troubles to inquire upon what tenure I held my mine. I took it for granted that the justice of my title was in itself enough to protect me."

"So it ought to be, Mr. Graham, and so I trust it will prove to be. We must not be alarmed at evils which may have no existence outside of our own frightened brains. But at the same time it is well enough to look at this case in its worst light, hoping always for the best. Let us therefore see how the case stands.

"The Government of the United States is seized, as we lawyers say, which means that it is the owner, of a vast tract of land, in fact, the entire unsold domain of the country. But its ownership is not like the ownership of a sovereign. It is such an ownership as individuals can have of land, while the sovereign authority lies with the States. This land the government will not sell, for the reason that it contains minerals. But it permits its citizens to run over the land at pleasure, without let or hindrance, to work its mines and to appropriate the proceeds to their own use. And in doing so, citizens are permitted to regulate their temporary possessions by such local customs or State laws as they may choose to adopt.

"But this gives no title to the land except a possession by sufferance, unaccompanied by any deed or patent, or written authority whatever. The State or Territorial courts finding individuals in possession of government land, treat that possession as a rightful one against all save the Government itself, which Government holding off its hands, it follows that the first occupant has a right to remain in possession, and to invoke the processes of the law courts to maintain that possession when assailed by any after-comer. But since the fact of his original coming into possession was an act performed without any record or solemnity, consisting of simply walking upon the land and commencing to work it, an act that can be done as well in the night as by day, as easily in private and alone as in the company of a thousand witnesses, and often is so done,

it follows that when his title is attacked by one claiming to be a prior possessor, his success in maintaining his rights depends absolutely upon what he can prove in court by the mouths of witnesses, and upon the purity of the court and jury before whom the case is tried, in judging of the testimony.

"So, Mr. Graham, in the end the whole matter comes back to the point from whence we started. If your courts are pure, and your bar an association of high-minded and honorable gentlemen, as they ought to be, and as they are in other countries, then your title is a perfect one ; if, on the contrary, the bar has lost its moral standing and become a gang of plunderers, aided by a corrupt judiciary chosen from its midst, then are your rights in extreme peril. For the announcement that you have discovered the valuable vein for which you are known to be in search, will be the signal for an onslaught upon you along the whole line that will require all of your energy and resources to resist."

"I fully agree with you," said Mr. Graham, "now that all has been explained to me. Really, I have never allowed the thought of my title to give me a moment's trouble. I have had matters of more immediate urgency weighing heavily upon me all of this time, and could not think of it. But we have this satisfaction, at least, Mr. Stacey, if we have no other. There is no evil without some good coming from it. We are in no immediate danger, for the prospects of our finding the vein appear even more distant than before. My troubles, like all others, are not without their corresponding advantages," he continued, with a sad smile, "for they do keep the hungry vultures from settling down upon me."

"True," said Harry, "and the respite which we shall obtain while you seek the precious metal must be used to prepare for the attack which has already been commenced, and which we know will be made more active and deadly as soon as that fortunate event shall be announced. Witnesses must be looked up and examined. Their testimony must be taken down in writing, so that they may not be tampered with afterwards by the opposite side. We must have surveys made of the whole claim and familiarize ourselves with the subject. That is about all that can be done for a just cause before the trial. What may be done for an unjust one I can imagine better than I wish to perform."

Mr. Graham thanked the young counsellor for the evident interest he was taking in his affairs and they separated.

It was six o'clock in the evening when Harry reached the American Eagle Hotel, and the gong had already spread the notice of dinner through the house. The boarders and guests, filled with alarm at the impending peril of being five seconds too late in their places, were rushing in hungry flocks along the narrow halls or pouring with fierce appetites into the hot and steaming dining-room. As he passed in, he felt his arm grasped by some one going in the same direction. It proved to be the friendly hand of Mr. Melchisedec Snakeweed.

"Come along," said that gentleman with all the warmth of a friend who unexpectedly meets another after a long absence; "come along with me and we will dine at the table together. I want to talk with you."

The two gentlemen elbowed their way to places at the table side by side, as well as they could, though, as was to have been expected, not without the usual accidents incidental to so desperate a feat as that of obtaining a seat at the table of a well-filled American hotel. The crowd of boarders was great and hungry and hurried. The waiters were skilful and zealous, for the hotel was new and everybody was upon their good behavior. These usually reckless and eccentric dining-room light-infantry men rushed back and forth, in the true American style that has made our hotels famous the world over, from the kitchen to the table through and amongst the crowd of still-arriving guests, bearing the most incredible loads of food both in quantity and variety. Notwithstanding these vast burdens, they marched and counter-marched, advanced or retreated as occasion required of them, often with skill and always with spirit and *élan*, with vast piles of soup plates, some empty, some filled, with plates of meat, with plates of squash, with plates of green corn, and hash, and potatoes, and cucumbers, and tomatoes, and beans, and succotash, laid first upon the yielding and unsubstantial foundation of their own arms, but built up higher and higher till the monstrous structure became strengthened and solidified by the very accumulation of material, towering far above their own heads, they plunged and charged through the famished crowd with as much care as the exigencies of the important occasion would permit. In solid column, first they formed at the kitchen door, then they moved down upon the table, carrying all before them, then they filed off into detached squads and platoons, and plunged away again in the direction of side-tables. In this form of manœuvre they were equally powerful. Then they became gradually more disorganized and broken up until individ-

ual waiters, armed "cap-a-pie" with every conceivable form of edible were seen skirmishing with desperate valor all about the floor, and from table to table, leading forlorn hopes in the very teeth of the enemy, pouring out their fire at point blank range, and delivering the soup plates to the hungry guests, always with some soup left in them, often with as much as half the quantity with which they embarked on the perilous expedition. To encounter one of these knights of the napkin as he rushed into the fray, was to be inevitably and ignominiously overthrown. It was even more dangerous than being run down by the solid charge of the division in force. But our two gentlemen dodged all of these dangers with great skill and with no little success. Harry was flanked by a skirmishing party of soup-carriers, and received two plates of that unctuous compound upon the back of his coat, greatly to the amusement of Mr. Snakeweed; but when that gentleman drew forth his handkerchief from the side-pocket of his coat to wipe his perspiring forehead, after the successful march, and pulled out with it, to the amusement of a dozen people opposite, a baked tomato and a full plate of squash that had been fired into him in a well-directed volley, while crossing the room, he ceased laughing at Harry's mishap, and delivered a homily upon the awkwardness of waiters in America. But his anger soon gave way before the demands of his appetite, and the two gentlemen issued such orders as in a short time placed them in the midst of a formidable collection of the varied food that only a moment before had seemed so dangerous in its eccentric and ungoverned course about the room.

"Where have you been for this age," at last demanded Mr. Snakeweed of Harry.

The young man told him that he had, since their arrival that day, been out attending to some business that had required immediate action, and that it had occupied the entire afternoon.

"I have been searching for you," said Mr. Snakeweed, "ever since we arrived, but in vain. I wanted to show you about the town, especially as you are of the profession and a stranger. I wished to introduce you to several members of the bar and also to two of the judges."

Harry thanked him kindly for the interest he was evincing in one so wholly unknown to him.

"Not at all," said Mr. Snakeweed; "you are a young lawyer, and that alone gives you a claim upon us veterans that never can be dishonored or repudiated. I have already seen several



of the first lawyers, and especially the great leader of the Washoe bar, Mr. Napoleon B. Spelter, and every thing has been arranged for a fitting reception to be given to you, sir. You are to be welcomed with a grand banquet to-morrow night at the Washoe House, and it is my proud and pleasing duty to extend the invitation to you."

Harry thanked Mr. Snakeweed again for his kindness.

"Do you know Napoleon B. Spelter?" asked Mr. Snakeweed, — "Mr. Napoleon Bonaparte Spelter, the eminent leader of the Washoe bar, to give that extraordinary man his full name and position."

Harry did not know that gentleman, nor, indeed, had he ever heard his name mentioned until that moment.

"You shall know him, sir," cried Mr. Snakeweed, enthusiastically.

It is probable that nowhere in the world have the judicial tribunals of a new colony been subjected to such temptations as the courts of Washoe during the first five years of the settlement of that Territory. It is, perhaps, not more than an ordinary proof of the admitted natural depravity of man, that they with a very few exceptions, as rare as they were honorable, yielded to the pressure that was brought to bear upon them. The population and organization of the Territory was directly caused by the discovery of the Comstock lode of silver ore. This marvelous deposit of precious metal, situated within an area of five miles in length by one mile in width, cutting through the sides of Mount Davidson called into existence within the period of three years, a property estimated at the time at one hundred and fifty millions of dollars in value. This vast store of treasure was by the bounty of the Government distributed, or with its permission seized and divided amongst the first few hundred who arrived upon the spot after the discovery. But the title in its commencement, was like the title to goods derelict possession was its best and only evidence, and a strong hand its surest protection. A man might have successfully appropriated a portion of the mines, valued at untold millions, yet his title rested alone in the memory or the virtue of witnesses. There could be no record proof of its validity. As may readily be imagined, when the courts were established, every title in the Territory was obliged to submit its justice to the decision of these tribunals.

At the time of the organization of the Territorial Government the war for the preservation of the Union, which for so many years, racked and scourged the land, had already commenced. The government at Washington was fully occupied

with the struggle for national existence. It was only natural, therefore, that the wants of a small and remote dependency like Washoe, with its twenty thousand souls should be lost sight of, at least for a time. Courts were created for the Territory, but the salaries of the judges were fixed at the insignificant sum of fifteen hundred dollars per annum, paid out of the national treasury in legal notes worth at times only one half their nominal value. These judges were to reside in a province where the cost of living was at the time absolutely enormous. It is not too much to say that the entire annual salary allowed by the government to a Washoe judge would not at the place of his required residence have provided him with the bare necessities of life for a single month ; and it was a matter of public notoriety that some of them lived in a style requiring an outlay of at least ten times as much as the compensation allowed them by Congress. Yet these functionaries were called upon each day to pass upon titles to property worth millions of dollars. Indeed, it is probable that the list of cases pending in any one of the courts would have footed up to a sum of value great enough to cover the entire aggregate wealth of more than one important American city, and perhaps of a State in the Federal Union. The natural consequence of all this soon exhibited itself too plainly to be mistaken. First, it began to be understood that certain lawyers were more successful in this or that court than others. These must, therefore, be retained if possible in all cases ; but this was not all. These men soon became known as the "brokers," so they were called, of the judges to whom they were attached. But this was soon improved upon. A judge with but one broker could of course only sell himself ✓ to one side, thus shutting himself out from the rich and fertile fields of competition and double bribery. In no long time, therefore, others were pointed out as having equal facilities for approaching the open ear and pressing the extended palm of justice. But it was soon ascertained that even judges could not always control the final determinations of courts ; that • juries and witnesses must be brought under proper influences, and that to do this, sheriffs and sheriff's officers and clerks, and prothonotaries had each a certain influence worth securing. So almost before Washoe was known to exist, beyond the range of lofty mountains that shut it out, like the valley of Rasselas, from the great world, it had already made such progress in a certain doubtful civilization as to number, amongst its trades and callings that of professional jurymen and witnesses who

made a regular business of testifying in any case upon the calendar, upon any side of any issue that might possibly come up for adjudication. These men, it was said, were organized into a society, and had their places, like cab-drivers, where one could always be found; the first one in order being entitled to the first employment that came to the stand. That such a state of things could long exist, the most simple mind would know to be impossible.

While the rich mining company, aided by its talented and unscrupulous lawyer, could, by slipping a reasonable amount of the mines' profits, or of the sum raised by calls from the shareholders, into the hand of the judge's friend, purchase peace and temporary security; all things went on, if not well, at least satisfactorily, but when it became known that the judge had two, had four, had ten, and at last a score of brokers, all, not only waiting, but actually importuning the suitors on all sides for subsidies, for to each mine there were a dozen conflicting claims; it became apparent that there could be no end to the matter; that the successful corruptionist of to-day was the baffled villain of to-morrow: that the fund of iniquity, poured out to its last drop, to accomplish a desired end, must be immediately replenished to meet and supply a more ravenous call. When these facts became evident, not the purity, but the selfishness of the society stood aghast, and for a time, almost resembled virtue. Public meetings were called, and prominent judges and well known lawyers were called before them to confront each other. It is enough to say to the man who loves his country, who hopes to see the great problem of man's capacity for self government demonstrated in our own favored land, that the sickening spectacle was there seen for the first, and let us hope, for the last time, of a judge of the highest tribunal in the province, together with a lawyer of known talent, and of marked and distinguished success as a practitioner in the Territorial Courts, standing up in the midst of an assemblage of the people, engaged in bandying back and forth, charges and insinuations of corruption and bribery, and subornation, while a vast crowd of discomfited suitors and baffled lawyers, men who had tried vainly to gain their causes, by outbidding their antagonists at the monstrous sale of justice by public outcry, who had failed to fill the ravenous maw of corruption which their own avarice and greed had created and thrown open, stood howling furiously at the feet of the filth-flinging pair.

Oh! my countrymen, descendants of the brave hearts; the



pure and noble souls who grappled with savage men, and more savage beasts, who faced the jaws of death from hunger and cold and grim want to plant upon these shores the tree of human rights and human liberty, and who so generously watered it with their blood; let an unknown and unskilled writer warn you of the danger that threatens to undo the glorious work, to poison the noble tree at its roots, and to wither it in its branches and leaves.

Turn each of you, citizens of our great Republic, and ask yourselves the question. Have I aided in the impure and unholy work of ingratitude to the past and treason to the future? If I have not actually urged on, and participated in the base profits of official corruption; have I in any manner lent my countenance to it afterwards by taking by the hand and welcoming the perjured wretch? How many of you have boldly turned your backs upon judges who have dragged the judicial ermine through the gutter of corruption? How many of you have refused the proffered hand of the fraudulent contractor, the dishonest quartermaster, or his rich and splendid agent and go between? Which of you has declined the proffered invitation to feast at the elegant table of Commodore Plug, and to stuff yourself with the choice sweets, the champagne, and turrapiu stews, that have turned the head and, addled the petty and narrow brain of Judge Bung, making flunkeyism, if possible more detestable than corruption?

All of you who have not resolutely turned away from the glitter of dishonest wealth; all of you who have not hurled your scorn and contempt alike upon the judge and his friend and broker, as well as upon the fraudulent suitor, that called them into existence; who have not closed your doors upon the briber, even more firmly than upon the bribed; upon the suborner than upon the suborned; have basely emptied a flood of baleful poison at the roots of the tree over which you have been set to guard and watch. If it still lives it has not been through your act, for you have done all that in you lies to undo the work of better men than you are.

As we have said before, it was not in the nature of things, that corruption so universal could continue. To be tempting to the leaders of the community, it must be to the advantage of but one side in a contest. Justice, when once purchased, must have been true to her engagements, otherwise she was not worth the purchase-money. This fact produced the famous indignation meeting, and this it was in a great measure, though

not wholly, that purified the Washoe bench, and scattered and distributed to other fields of industry the Washoe bar and its accessories. While favorable decisions were increasing daily and hourly, in market price, their actual practical value seemed to be going with equal rapidity in precisely the opposite direction. The fact was recognized and acted upon, and the sharpest lawyers were heard recommending the settlement and compromising of conflicting claims, outside of court. But another circumstance, occurring about this time, assisted greatly in cleansing the filthy fountain of justice. The supplies of money failed suddenly. Not that the mines became less rich, but the assessment paying public, which had blindly poured out at the feet of mining directors, in obedience to swindling calls upon shares, vast sums of money, ostensibly for developing mines, but really to be distributed between the president, the superintendent, and the secretary, opened its sleepy eyes, and closed its purse. The confidence vein had been worked out. The managers of "wild cats" had "struck a horse" in the main level. Of the one hundred and fifty millions of nominal value in litigation in the courts, one month struck off one hundred and forty-five millions. These had chiefly been outside mines, "wild cats," as they were called, whose existence depended upon the stir they could make. The fact of a dozen suits pending against one of them, was all to its advantage. The confiding shareholders at a distance heard of the vast expenses incurred by the law suit, and believed that they must have a good mine, otherwise there would not be such a struggle over its possession. So they freely, even eagerly, responded to the monthly calls levied upon the shares, and the resident managers rioted in luxury and dissipation. But this was brought to an end by what Mr. Snakeweed called a dangerous want of confidence. There was no longer any money to steal. ✓ No more money could be distributed in bribes, for there was none to pay them with. The rich paying mines along the Comstock lode were brought under a more economical management by the alarmed shareholders; secretaries and superintendents were turned out, and new men put in their places; lawyers employed at enormous standing salaries, through fear of their influence being thrown upon the opposite side, were discharged; suits were compromised and settled; professional witnesses and professional jurors were religated back to their original position of lawyers' clerks, and lawyers' runners, and lawyers' friends, dependents, and poor relations; and, at last,

✓ the Washoe bench, and the Washoe bar stood forth, bright, shining, spotless, and whitewashed. But all of this took place long after the events which it is our duty to record here. We only mention what occurred at a period subsequent to our story, in order to assure our reader that the state of things once so discouraging, no longer exists. It will be a satisfaction to many of our readers to know that there is a point where judicial and legal corruption must pause; that the harassed litigant may deem himself in a measure safe, when the subject matter of the dispute is consumed, and then, at least, the fountain of justice may be expected to run clear. It is not impossible that the tribunal of Mr. Justice Ape became a respectable court, after the property of the litigious cats had been disposed of, and so it was in Washoe. But at the time Harry Stacey paid his visit to that interesting country, the cheese, already broken into bits, was being greedily munched by the courts and the dependents, and its rich aroma and delicate flavor had mounted to the brain of justice and caused her, for a moment, to forget herself.

“But you will see Napoleon B. Spelter to-morrow evening,” continued the veteran lawyer, who had now finished his dinner and was rising from the table. “Perhaps, sir, when you have seen and conversed with him you may yourself be able to appreciate the force of my remarks upon this wonderful man. I shall expect to find you ready to accompany me to the Washoe House at eight o’clock to-morrow evening; and until that hour, if I should not see you again, I will bid you a good-evening.”

Harry promised to be ready in time, and returning the good-evening of Mr. Snakeweed, they separated; and Harry took his way to the apartments of Mr. Graham.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

NO. 16, AMERICAN EAGLE HOTEL.

HARRY STACEY found the ladies at home when he called at No. 16, but Mr. Graham had already finished his dinner and hurried away to the office. Helen met him at the door and opened it for him. Poor girl, she had heard of his arrival, and

that it was a visit of business in the employment of her father. "He has not come to see me," thought she. "He did not come down to bid me good-by when I came away, and now if I see him it is because he has been employed by my father to come, and not of his own wish to see the girl who has been so foolish as to throw her heart at his feet." She shook hands with him and bade him good-evening.

"My father is not at home," she said, blushing red as a rose, which Harry was too confused to see, and holding the door open as if in doubt whether he would enter after that announcement.

"Who is it, Helen?" cried Matilda. "Is not that Mr. Stacey's voice?" and she rose from the sofa. "Oh, come in, sir!" she cried, with great joy. "I am so glad to see you, Mr. Stacey!" and Harry was drawn into the room which he had been on the point of leaving at the threshold, under pretence of going away to see his client.

But if he doubted of his welcome on the part of Helen, the manner of her mother was all that he could wish for. If he had been an only son long absent, he could not have been more warmly, more cordially received by Mrs. Graham. She sat up on the sofa on which she had been reclining the whole day.

"I am quite well, dear Baby," she said to Helen, who would have made her lie down again. "Mr. Stacey brings me health. I am so glad to see him," and she seized his hand and held it, and made him sit by her side.

"I believe you are in love with Mr. Stacey, mamma," cried her daughter. "If his sweetheart were here to see, she would, I am sure, be jealous."

Harry's heart sank within him upon hearing the conjunction "if" that lay at the commencement of the sentence.

"I am sure I am to-night," said Matilda; "I am so glad to see him that I feel almost restored to health once more. You are going to stay with us some time, are you not, Mr. Stacey?"

"No," Harry said. He was only to be in Virginia two days. He had come upon some professional business which Mr. Graham had been so kind as to confide to him, and expected to complete in two days all that could be done for the present. "But," he added, with a self-denying smile, "I shall be called hither from time to time more than once within the next year, and you will see quite enough of me, I am sure, before the business is finished."

"Not unless you stay all of the time," cried Mrs. Graham, with an enthusiasm that could not be other than genuine.

"Ah," thought Harry, "if the daughter would only welcome me in this manner. But," and here he struggled to repress a sigh, "the mother does not see in me a suitor for her daughter's hand or she would not be so cordial." But he could not help loving Helen more than ever when he thought, as he now did, that she was concealing from her parents the discovery she alone had made of his passion for her. "She does not wish to humiliate me," he thought, "and so she does not tell them of my ridiculous and foolish ambition."

So Matilda sat upon the sofa, and held Harry's hand in her's as if it had been her son that had come home to her after a long and perilous absence.

"Tell me everything," she cried, "we are both dying to hear of all that has occurred at the Cosmodental Hotel since we came away."

Harry thought, "if you are both so anxious, why is it that only one of you takes the pains to ask or even to evince the slightest curiosity about it?"

"How is dear Blanche McIver, and her father.

Matilda was glad to hear of the well-being of all of these, for she loved them dearly. Colonel Hornspout was the kindest gentleman in the world, she said, and if he had added to his poem, she for one would listen to it to the end though it were a thousand verses long, out of respect for the loyal and honest nature of the author, if for no other reason. When the subject was exhausted, she turned to Henry.

"Tell us about yourself," she said, "for you are not to be forgotten. Have you been well? Are you prosperous? What are your hopes? We know you are just embarking in life, and we know that you will succeed, for you deserve to succeed. So pardon our asking you about it, for we feel that your joy is our joy."

Tears came into poor Harry's eyes, and he thanked the kind lady for the interest she took in him.

"I am doing as well as I have any right to expect," he declared; "but that is not much." He could not tell her how well he was succeeding. "I cannot make this ingenuous question of a noble-hearted lady a means of setting up my prospects with the one I love. Did she suspect what is in my heart she would not ask me such a question. Perhaps she would not even permit me to be here in friendly and kindly conversation with her." So he said that he was not in absolute failing cir-



cumstances, but that he could not say that success had placed itself as yet within even hoping distance.

"Courage, my dear young friend!" cried Matilda, observing the despondent tone of Harry's voice. "I am sure that you will succeed; and, though I may not live to see it, I know that you will yet reach the supreme point of your ambition. I do not for a moment doubt you. I can see plainly enough that your honest and patient merit will force success to come to you and surrender herself captive."

Poor Harry blushed to the eyes at the kind lady's compliments.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### A DECLARATION OF LOVE.

DURING the first month after the arrival of the Grahams at Virginia city, their life need not be described except in a general way. The flying visit of Harry Stacey had been an event, to them, of importance; but that gone, the general monotony of their dreary existence followed without interruption. The ladies kept themselves closely in their rooms, only leaving them to take their meals in the dining saloon of the hotel. Had they been anxious to go out of the house, they could not have easily done so, for Mr. Graham's troubles kept him almost incessantly at the office or at the hoisting works, and gave him no time to attend upon them. They knew no one in the house or the town when they arrived; and their habits of seclusion prevented them from making acquaintances. Then the badness of the roads and the natural severity and barrenness of the scenery in the vicinity, made rides and excursions both difficult and uninviting. The town itself, as we have already said, was little else than a succession of grog-shops; "dead-falls," as they were most appropriately called, and gambling-houses alternated, with occasional provision stores scattered along indiscriminately upon either side of a single, long, narrow, straggling, unpaved and dirty street. This was filled all day with immense wagons, drawn by horses or oxen, engaged in hauling ore to the crushing mills. The four walls of their rooms were therefore, not only the most agreeable place, but almost the only place that was practicably accessible to them. We have said they possessed no acquaintances in Virginia, but this was not

strictly correct. Bob Greathouse, the murderer, and Jack Gowdy, the stage-driver, were both inmates of the hotel ; they had been so from the day of its completion. Greathouse had come there because it was the best hotel in the town ; and he was in the habit of making his home only in the best. Gowdy, however, had found himself transferred to the new establishment by arrangement of the stage-company. It is always the custom in the new towns of the west for the hotel at which the stages halt, to board all of the drivers. This they generally do gratuitously as an inducement to the stage proprietors to make the house the starting and stopping place for the line. The ladies were always glad to see Greathouse as a familiar face amongst so many strange ones. And though they had some notion of his standing in the community, for the well known addition to his name would have alone informed them of that ; yet his conduct towards them was so unexceptionable, so invariably polite and even deferential, that they could have found no cause to treat him other than as a gentleman of good position, even had they felt inclined to do so ; but this, Helen for some reason that she did not explain to her mother, evidently had no notion of doing. To her, Colonel Greathouse was a gentleman always entitled to her kindest greeting and her pleasantest smile. They met every day in the passage-ways of the hotel as the ladies would go to or from dinner and breakfast, and always as old friends. Greathouse would generally walk with them as far as their door, and standing there converse a few minutes, and go away. He could never, however, be induced to cross the threshold, though always invited and even pressed to do so. He would look into the "enchanted palace" as he sometimes would laughingly call it, where the beauties were kept enthralled by the genii of Mount Davidson. But he never had time to enter ; he had an engagement of some sort and was late. He was lazy in the mornings and had overslept himself, till now he must run away to attend to his affairs ; but he would come in and sit down the very next time he passed. But the next time some other excuse, equally polite would be made. He seemed instinctively to feel that his habits of life, his reputation for violence and lawlessness, all unfitted him for the companionship that was so ingenuously offered to him. He would look wistfully into the parlor of Helen and her mother when invited to enter, and then with an effort tear himself away. It was enough for him to know that he might enter and be welcome if he would ; that if he remained without, it was by his own decree

of exclusion ; and so he did not enter. He would not take advantage of that generous confidence that had led the beautiful, almost the noble young lady to overstep the conventionalities of even Washoe society, and invite to a friendly, social intimacy, the outcast, the man of terror, recognized by all as the gambler, and stigmatized by many as the murderer. But with Jack Gowdy it was altogether different ; he had no such delicate scruples ; he was soon on the most delightful terms with the family, and quite at ease in their apartments. No sooner would he drive up to the door of the American Eagle, from his trip over the mountains, than he would throw the lines to the stable-boy, and walk up to No. 16, to inquire after the health of the ladies. And that was not all ; for when the door was opened, Jack would walk in without ceremony and plump down upon the floor some contribution to the comfort or pleasure of the ladies. Sometimes it would be a huge box of oranges or apples, or a basket of California pears ; or perhaps it would take a more sentimental turn and prove to be a beautiful flowering geranium, brought all the way from sunny Sacramento ; a rose-tree covered with roses ; or even a fresh Camelia in blossom. Thanks to Jack's remembrance, Helen's little parlor and balcony was transformed into a regular hot-house of roses and beautiful exotics, not one of which could have been found in Washoe, and which only his careful attention could have brought safely over the mountains. At first Helen tried to induce Jack to accept from her, at least the amount that these articles had cost him in California, but in vain.

"Jack Gowdy is a stage-driver, Miss," he answered, "and is not at present in the fruit and flower-selling line ; when he is, if he is lucky enough to have your trade with him, he will send you his bill."

"But, Jack," argued Helen, "stage-drivers are not rich men generally, and they can't afford to spend their money in presents to young ladies."

"Do you think it is fair, Miss, to taunt a fellow about his poverty, or about his business, so long as it is a gentlemanly one," said Jack, evidently hurt. "I needn't have been poor if I had taken care of my money, as some folks do, I'd have plenty ; but I don't care for money, and never did, and I hope I never shall. When I first came to this Territory, I could have bought the whole Comstock Lode for fifty dollars. And if I hadn't bet all my money the night before on three aces and a

pair of nines, and lost it, the Comstock Lode would be mine to-day, and I would not be driving stage."

"Oh, Jack," cried Helen, "I didn't intend to hurt your feelings."

"But I have never regretted it, Miss," continued Jack, paying no heed to the lady's apology; "and I'd do the same thing over again to-night if I had the chance. The bet was a judicious bet if it did loose."

"But Jack, Jack," said Helen, beseechingly, "listen to me."

But Jack paid no attention, he was only anxious to put himself right, by an explanation of his own position.

"By a combination that won't happen one time in a million, Jack Skaggs dealt himself four trays, and swept the board. A man can't expect it to come his way every time; all he can do is to act prudently and judiciously, and then if he loses, he has the satisfaction of feeling that it is not his fault."

Again, Helen tried to explain; but Jack was inexorable and went on,—

"Miss, everybody can't be rich, and you ought not to throw up a man's poverty to him, nor yet his calling, if it is a gentlemanly one, as everybody knows stage-driving is."

"There, now, Jack I hope you have done scolding me. You are a really cruel fellow to go on so, when I meant no harm, but only for your good. I am sorry that I said anything to hurt your feelings. Forgive me, and take my hand, will you?"

Jack's wrath was gone in an instant. He could scarcely keep the tears from bursting forth and running down his nose. But he took her hand.

"I'm a ruffian, Miss Helen, for thinking that you could ever intend to hurt anybody in this world. I am the one to apologise, and not you; and if I hadn't been a vulgar, ignorant, stage-driver, I would never have brought you to the point of asking me to forgive you, when you hadn't done nothing but behave like a born lady as you are, and always was, and always will be."

"Come now Jack, it's all over and we are friends; and you sha'n't talk that way about yourself; but I would rather you would not spend quite so much for me, unless you intend to let me pay you back; it does not seem to me to be right.

"Indeed, Miss Helen," said Jack, imploringly; "let me have my way about this thing; I never have had a chance to spend any money on anybody but myself in this country; I've got no kinsfolk except two brothers, that's a driving stage down

on the Gilla, and over towards El Paso ; at all events they are there, if whiskey, or the Apaches havn't got them yet ; for there is a fight going on all the time, as to which of them two shall take the boys into camp first. They can take care of themselves as well as I can. I never save any money, it all goes on cards in some way. If it isn't pharo, it is poker or seven-up, and they are just as uncertain games. Sometimes maybe you've noticed that I haven't come in to see you when the stage has got in of an evening ; well, its been because I've been ashamed to look at you ; for I've been over to Sacramento and drawn my money at the office, and gone agin pharo and it hasn't come my way. And then, when I have been starting over the mountains the next morning, I've seen some little trifling thing, that maybe, wouldn't have cost a dollar ; a flower-pot or some little woman's trick like that, and have thought how much good it would do the yellow-haired lady, that was wasting away for want of the sun, in No. 16, over here in the mines, and I've felt that I would like to take it to her, and I didn't have the dollar to buy it with, all owing to a card falling on the wrong pile. And them's the times I didn't come to see you, Miss Helen. Nothing that I've ever brought to you has done you half so much good as your "thank ye, Jack," has done me."

"Oh! Jack, you are too kind ; poor fellow, you must come to see me just the same, whether you bring me anything or not. Don't forget that. And Jack you must try and let cards alone and save your money."

"Well, only let me do as I please about it, Miss Helen. It isn't with me, you know, as it is with them rich superintendents and mining directors, that cut around here, driving their double teams up and down the Grade, going a mile inside of three minutes ; dashing out to Steamboat Springs of a Sunday, and spending the money they've stole through the week from the shareholders. Of course, you can't receive attention from them fellows, for they'd want to marry you, or some outrageous thing like that. But with me, you know, I don't want anything from anybody that is not justly my due, and I know you are too good, too well educated, and too beautiful for anybody in this Territory. And besides, Jack Gowdy don't want to marry no lady, much less a beautiful lady, good enough to be the wife of General Jackson himself, if he was here, and wanted to marry."

"There, there, Jack," cried Helen, now run along ; "you are

as gallant as you are generous. Good bye," and Jack found himself turned out. But though Bob Greathouse did not enter the apartments of the Grahams, he brought Charley Hunter to Helen, and asked her to become acquainted with the boy, and to be kind to him. This she cheerfully promised to do; and from that time, Charley was a daily and constant visitor at No. 16. Perhaps the sorest trials that the young lady had to undergo, were the constant visits of Mr. Enoch Bloodstone, morning, noon, and night. From the moment of the arrival of the family, that gentleman had commenced, what may be called a regular courtship of the young lady, of whom he professed to be enamored. It was nothing short of a siege. He had set down before the walls that enclosed the coveted prize, and was evidently determined to reduce the works, by process of circumvallation. He would starve her into submission, if she would not love; him at least, she should see no one else to love, should hear of no one else, should think of no one else. He had arranged it, so that his apartments were not only upon the same floor of the hotel, but were in the hall, and almost adjoining those of Mr. Graham. Though this was excessively annoying to Helen, she never mentioned the fact to her father, or to her mother, even by so much as a hint. She saw her father going out of his rooms each morning, with a growing look of sadness, to take his place at the office of the mine, and her heart told her, but too distinctly, that his burden was already heavy enough, without increasing it by so much as a single feather from her load. Mr. Graham never mentioned the name of Enoch Bloodstone to her, in connection with his continuous offer of marriage; nor had the daughter referred to the subject since the old correspondence, more than a year before. It appeared to Helen that the subject of Mr. Bloodstone's attentions was a painful one to her father; her treatment of that gentleman was as polite, even as cordial as she could make it, without absolute violence to her feelings. She always received his visits cheerfully, no matter how often they were made, or how apparently inopportune the time; but she never went out with him. Each day for weeks, he met her in the parlor with an invitation to drive, to ride, or to attend the theatre. But this was invariably declined, pleasantly and firmly. "She never," she said, "went anywhere away from home, unaccompanied by her father or mother; she would go if they would go." But the father somehow was never asked, and the mother, though without concert with Helen of any

sort, still always made some excuse, and did not go. Mr. Bloodstone would often appear to be annoyed at this refusal, but his visits did not grow any less frequent on that account; his manner too, gradually assumed a domineering and meddling turn. He began to take upon himself the privilege of controlling the actions of the young lady. The siege was apparently in his judgment, coming to a close, and the beleaguered garrison was about to surrender. He did not like the acquaintance that had been formed with Bob Greathouse and Jack Gowdy. "They were low, disreputable people," he said, that a lady who respected herself, or her friends, would not condescend to recognize, or speak with. As for Greathouse, he was a gambler, and his name of murderer alone was sufficient to exclude him from respectable society. And Gowdy was a low, ignorant, drunken, card playing Pike Countian, and if this was not enough, he was a stage-driver."

All of this Helen submitted to with marvellous patience. If her father was obliged to endure such a man to be about him daily, with all of his troubles, she, as his daughter, ought not to complain of the petty annoyances he inflicted upon her. But though she allowed Bloodstone to talk as much as he would, she made no change in her conduct towards Greathouse or the stage-driver. She met Bob each day in the hall, and saluted him cordially, and when, as they walked, they reached the door of No. 16, she turned and invited him kindly, and with evident sincerity to forget his business engagements for that once, and enter the parlor. But the invitation was always declined; only once, when Greathouse looked in, and saw Bloodstone, who happened that time to be sitting on the sofa, looking angry and sullen, did he appear to hesitate in his invariable resolution. For a moment Helen thought he was coming in, but after returning Bloodstone's contemptuous look, by another of fierce defiance, that caused that gentleman to tremble and turn pale. He changed back again, after a moment's hesitation, to his old excuse of business engagements, and went his way. As for Jack Gowdy, she found no more fault with his attentions. She saw and appreciated the sincerity and disinterestedness of his devotion to her, and with a secret resolve, at some future time, to repay him, perhaps when he should be in more need of it, the amount of his outlay. She accepted with thanks the fruit and flowers brought by him, each trip over the mountains, with so much delicacy and care. And when, as once occurred, Mr. Bloodstone sneered at the pointed attentions of her

suitors, the gambler and the stage-driver, and asked her when the wedding would take place, she turned upon him, and answered with lofty carriage, "That it would take place as soon as she could determine in her mind which of the two she loved the most." But her wrath blazed so high, that its heat did not burn out with this rebuke, and she went beyond, and added "That they were the only gentlemen in behavior she had met with in Washoe, and that many others in that Territory might copy them with very great advantage to themselves, as well as to the cause of good breeding."

Mr. Bloodstone had not courage to face the lady again upon this subject, for he saw that there was a point beyond which he could not drive her, without a recoil that was mortifying to himself. So he let matters take their own course, contenting himself with gathering together all the stories of the early broils and bloody engagements of Greathouse, and carefully detailing them to the ladies whenever he called upon them. He was jealous of Bob, and feared that Helen would fall in love with him; while she, on the other hand, so thoroughly detested Bloodstone, that she would willingly have had him think so, if she could have brought it about, without either directly, or by implication, telling a falsehood.

Of all of these things Mr. Graham either was, or appeared to be, totally ignorant. For some reason he always absented himself from home while Bloodstone was there. He had business at the office, or at the hoisting works, even when he would come in apparently with the intention of remaining for a time. If Bloodstone, as often occurred, dropped in afterwards, it appeared to change suddenly Mr. Graham's plans, and he would remember some business that required his attention, and would withdraw, almost with painful haste. Helen observed the conduct of her father, without speaking of it. She dreaded to inquire the cause. As ailing people sometimes fail to consult a physician, through fear that his examination may reveal some unknown, and mortal disorder hitherto concealed; so did poor Helen shrink from probing to the bottom the mysterious secret of her father's connection with Bloodstone, lest it might show something more cruel towards her own future, than she now dared to allow herself to think of. That Bloodstone had made heavy advances of money to her father, to enable him to explore the mines, she was already well aware; but what obligation he had come under, to her suitor, to induce him to do so, she did not know, nor did she dare to ask. In that quarter



lay fearful misery and blasted hopes. Was it strange that she did not wish to explore so forbidding a field? In this manner, and with no change, at least, for the better, in the prospects of the Graham family, the winter passed away and spring came. The mine had been worked but little of late; in fact, Mr. Bloodstone had told Mr. Graham that his own fortune was nearly exhausted, and that the gangs of men were still kept at work in the extreme bottom of the mine, but the rock instead of growing more favorable to expectations of silver, became daily less and less encouraging, until Mr. Graham at last, himself felt that hope was well nigh gone, and that he ought not to expect Bloodstone to longer proceed with the enterprise.

And now Helen observed an even more marked change in her father's conduct towards herself. He appeared actually to dread to speak to her and constantly avoided her. She had long seen that the old confidence that had once made them more like brother and sister than father and daughter, had passed away and was gone. The bare danger of being alone with her for an instant seemed to drive him from the house, so that the ladies scarcely ever saw him during his waking moments.

To make matters worse for Helen, her mother's health did not improve. She appeared to be constantly failing; not rapidly and suddenly, but each week or month that passed away left her not quite as well as during the previous period.

She could not now disclose to her poor, failing mother the grief that was weighing upon her heart. No, she would bear it herself alone.

Each day she resolved to throw herself at her father's feet, and beg him to tell her all. She would say to him, —

"Dear father, fear not your little Helen! No matter what you wish her to do, she will do it and do it cheerfully. Do not think that she will avoid the sacrifice. If, like Jephtha, you have made a vow to sacrifice the first that comes from your door to meet you, your darling knows that it must be herself, and she will not ask you to go back, but will joyfully pay the penalty. Only meet her once more as you used to do, and take her to your heart; this is all she asks."

But she never said it. When they met he gave her no opportunity. He seemed to fear the very presence and sight of his daughter.

It soon became apparent that her mother observed what was

going on, and that her health was visibly affected by it. She spoke to Helen of the change in her father's manner as a great calamity that had come upon them. Her husband was no longer himself, she said, —

“He has lost his love for me, now that I have become an invalid!”

At times, with the peevishness of the sick-room, she would speak of herself as an incumbrance, a drag upon her Edmond, to be thrown aside.

“He does not love me any more, and since I have lost his love, why should I live?”

Poor Helen found her soul bowed down with grief. She was bearing more than her share. She had given away her own heart, and it had been tossed back to her as an idle thing, so she thought. And now her mother, prostrate more by mental than physical disorders, called for all her watchfulness and tender care.

So this state of sorrow, half concealed, and disappointment hidden continued in the house, till it appeared to be at its very worst, when one day a ray of sunshine illumined, not only the gloomy sick-room, but at least two of the drooping hearts therein.

This was the arrival of Harry Stacey.

He had again been called to the Territory by the slowly progressing suit of the Bosh Company against Mr. Graham. Some demurrer was to be agreed or motion to be resisted. Not a matter of great importance, for the suit was not being pressed with the energy that would have been thrown into it, had the possessor of the mines been more fortunate with his discoveries. He had, as before, come for but a few days only.

But this time his manner was greatly changed. Whether the constant advice of Blanche McIver to press his suit openly had influenced him or not we are unable to say. But it is certain that he approached Helen this time with a boldness that re-kindled in her heart all the latent hopes that had so long smouldered in concealment.

The effect upon the mother was even more marked than upon the daughter. It was again as if her son had come back to her once more. She almost forgot her ailings. For some time past she had spent the day as well as the night in her bed. She had seemed to lack the courage more than the strength necessary to rise. But now that Mr. Stacey had come,

she insisted upon being dressed and setting up two or three hours each day.

And so the three spent the few days of Harry's visit, or so much of them as he could spare for that purpose, in the little parlor of No. 16.

Helen found heart and voice to sing her old songs once more, and the mother, for the moment, forgot to repine at the altered manner of her husband. The daughter sang Robin Adair without being asked to sing it. Indeed, she found herself singing that song almost without knowing why.

Each day that Mr. Stacey lingered in Virginia, and he had already overstayed his first limit, Helen found herself growing more and more happy in his presence. It was a beautiful dream that was creeping over her. A fairy island was drifting towards the young girl. It was the rock upon which she had spent the day with her lover, now transformed, as she had seen it floating upon the lake at Wilmington in her dream after the ball. Already its carpet of living green, its spreading palms and incense-bearing shrubs were coming in view. And when the idol of her heart would sit near her, or stand by the piano when she sang, his smile was the smile she had seen in her dreams; and his arm, when it moved, appeared almost to point towards the approaching scene of beauty and love. He was no longer the occasional visitor, who had by turns fascinated her with his cordiality and chilled her with a reserve that approached nearly to hauteur. He was now always kind, ingenuous, almost loving. At times she thought that he had but to open his mouth and a winged messenger of love would fly from it to perch at her ear, and tell the story that seemed to be already bursting from his eyes.

But he did not speak, and his going away always awakened her, not merely to a sense of disappointment, but to a notion, which though forgotten while Harry was present, still lay like a heavy burden pressing upon her weary and overlaid heart; a notion that her moments of happiness were the price of treason to her suffering father.

"How can I," she thought, "dream of love, of joy and happiness, when I see his sad face growing hourly more pale and careworn, and hear his step, once so light and springing, as he hurried home to us, resound daily more heavy and slow?"

While lying in her bed when all was over, she would feel like a guilty thing when she would remember the light and even

frivolous music that, sitting at the piano, she had thrown carelessly off, while thinking only of the object of her heart's devotion at her side.

At last the time when Harry must absolutely take leave of them came round. He called, as usual, in the afternoon. He must go away the evening of the following day, so he said, and this must be his last visit save one. Matilda had not been as well as usual that morning and had not arisen. Helen received him alone.

The early departure of Harry seemed that afternoon to already cast a gloom upon them both. For the first time since his arrival, a reserve such as had so chilled them on former occasions seemed to again take possession of the two. He had something special to say to Helen, and its importance appeared to be too great for either his nerve or his spirits. She, on the other hand, seemed to feel that she was to receive a communication from him, and her trepidation was as great as his.

The ordinary familiar subjects of conversation that had been wholly at their command for a week past, seemed suddenly to have taken wings and flown away beyond their reach. Music, poetry, mutual friends, their old home in the far off East, the beautiful forest at Wilmington, all seemed unwilling to be talked about. Even Blanche McIver, beloved by both of them, was now forgotten, and her familiar name not mentioned. And so an hour passed away, during which the weather was brought under discussion, and disposed of at least a score of times, to be again reverted to in moments of desperation. Harry had taken his hat to go ten minutes after his arrival, but seemed unable to get away, though in apparent readiness.

At last, after a silence that had continued so long as to become positively painful, the poor fellow spoke, at first, in stammering confusion, but gaining courage as he proceeded. Had he looked once at Helen's blushing face, he would have observed what young gentlemen never do observe at such times, that her confusion and dismay were even greater than his own. But he did not look at her. His most desperate courage was not equal to such an enterprise as that.

He began by asking her as a favor of passing value to him, to listen to a few words that he had to say. Then he told her of his life, not forgetting to go beyond his own, even back to the parent hive in Vermont, and tracing the little swarm to its

new home in Ohio ; and so down to the moment he spoke. Nothing was omitted.

Then he told her of his employment by Mr. Graham, and that it was at the expense and upon the business of her father that he was at that moment in the Territory. It was not in accordance with his notions of right, he said, to take advantage of such an opportunity to advance his own interest in any manner, save by the faithful performance of the employment intrusted to him. But he had, he said, long before that employment commenced, bestowed his heart upon one who was dearer to him than his own life. That beloved one was the daughter of his client. It was Helen herself. She was more to him than all the world beside. But he would consider it a violation of his duty to Mr. Graham to ask her love in return, without first having obtained his consent to address her. This he had thought of carefully and considerately, and he had determined to tell the object of his adoration all that lay in his heart. By doing this, he might perhaps avoid the necessity of inflicting the matter upon Mr. Graham, who had already much upon his mind. Should the lady be unable to give him any encouragement, then the subject could be left at this point. He would accept his fate from her, if it should be adverse. But if there was any hope for him, then he could go no further without the consent of the gentleman who had given him admission to his family circle for a wholly different purpose. He would not, therefore, at this time, ask her to love him, nor, indeed, to give him any answer to-day. He would declare the undying passion for her that burnt in his breast in a blaze as strong as his own nature, and then he would come again to-morrow, and ask permission to visit her father, and to ask him to permit him to occupy honorably another relationship towards himself than the one of paid counsellor, as now was the case.

Helen had not spoken from the commencement of Harry's declaration to its end. He had not permitted her to do so. He had only been anxious for her to hear all and to know and believe, whatever might be her decision upon his hopes, that he was at least incapable of a base or unmanly attitude towards any one, and especially towards the gentleman in whose employment he was. When he had finished, he arose to take leave of her. He did not ask for an answer that day. He would call to-morrow. He still did not look at her ; had he done so, he would not have gone away, for he would have read her answer

in her eyes. Had he even turned to her to take leave, her joy would have been too apparent to be overlooked even by his resolute and premeditated blindness. She rose as he did. She longed to throw herself into his arms and to pour out upon his shoulder the flood of joy that gushed up from the fountain of her soul. She could have sung the song of praise and glory, for her heart was full of gratitude and love. The beautiful island had floated slowly, but surely, towards the shore, and now lay spread out before her in all its fairy loveliness, inviting her to come and forget all but happiness; and the idol of her soul stood by her side, pointing towards it. But true to his self-imposed obligation, he stopped not to hear anything from her. He would call to-morrow; and so the door closed upon him, and he passed out of her sight.

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## CHAPTER XX.

### AN ENGAGEMENT TO MARRY.

THE reviving effects of Harry Stacey's visit upon Matilda Graham had passed away, and her spirits were falling again into the state of prostration from which they had been temporarily lifted by his arrival. Her husband had daily and hourly grown more downcast before her eyes and more reticent of the causes of his dejection. She had not, of late, been let into the secrets of his financial difficulties. Her health had not been such as to make it advisable to do so. Doctor Brierly, who also resided in the hotel and called every day, as much in the character of a friend of the family as in that of attendant physician, had long since recommended that everything tending to produce mental excitement should be carefully kept from her, and so it had been done. Mr. Graham had struggled long and manfully to so control his feelings, when in his wife's presence, as not to cause her to suspect the demon of care that was gnawing at his vitals. But for the last month the effort had failed. True, he had

told her nothing ; but his sleepless nights, his constant tossing in the bed, his half-suppressed moanings, his disturbed and fitful slumber, with his depressed manner when awake, and, of late, his increased absence from home, had been enough to not only alarm his wife, but to make her fear that matters were even more desperate than, perhaps, they actually were.

We have said in the last chapter that, when Harry came to inform them of his intended departure, that Matilda had not arisen from her bed. She knew, however, that Harry was in the parlor, for Helen had come in directly upon his arrival with a message of greeting from him.

"Give him my kindest wishes," said the mother, "and say that to-morrow, when he comes to take leave of us, I shall be up to receive him and to bid him adieu."

And so the daughter had gone hopefully back, with her mother's kiss upon her cheek, to the interview that we know left her so happy and so full of joy. The parlor door had scarcely closed upon the young man as he went away, when Matilda beheld her golden-haired baby rushing to her arms, her eyes lit up and beaming with pleasure.

"Oh, mamma," she said, clasping her mother in her arms and bursting into tears, "what do you think? He loves me."

She could say no more, but lay with her face upon her mother's breast, convulsively sobbing.

Matilda rose up in bed and took her darling in her arms, and kissed and stroked her beautiful hair, but spoke never a word. She understood it all ; there were no questions to ask, there was nothing more to tell, at least, not then. Helen's one sentence, "He loves me," had explained every thing. Matilda only kissed her daughter again and again, while tears of joy rolled down from her cheeks and mingled with those of her daughter. That they would have soon found words, is altogether certain ; for, when the eyes have told their story, the lips always follow. But, while they were still clasped in each other's arms, as Helen lay mentally gazing at the beautiful green island that her love had painted so often, now so near the shore and more inviting than ever, a sharp knock came at the door, sending a thrill of indefinable terror through both, waking Helen from her love dream and sending her fairy land far away again to the back ground. She rose hurriedly, dried her eyes, and went to the parlor. There was no one in the room. The knocking had been at the hall door ; with a vague dread, which, perhaps, arose from her reluctance at such a time to see any one, she advanced to

the door and threw it open. A gentleman stood without awaiting admission. It was Mr. Enoch Bloodstone. The presence of this superintendent had always been hateful to Helen Graham from the first day that she had met him. And, since her residence in Virginia, he had become daily more repulsive to her. For some time before Harry's last visit she had grown to dread more and more each visit of this man as if, instinctively, she felt that a cruel blow was about to be struck her from that quarter. The terrible secret that had separated her father from his family each day gradually took form and became more distinctly horrible, as the notion grew upon her that Enoch Bloodstone was in some manner wrapped up with her and was part of her destiny. For weeks before Harry's arrival, she had become so nervous in thinking and studying over this, that the very footsteps of Bloodstone, his voice in the distance, overcame her almost as a vertigo. Each time he entered the room she dreaded that some frightful development would occur then, and when he was gone and there had been no catastrophe, she was left so racked and shaken that she sometimes was obliged to go to her bed to recover her strength and composure sufficiently to appear before her mother. Since Harry's arrival, for some unknown reason, Bloodstone had scarcely made his appearance in the apartments of Mr. Graham. This change, added to the happiness of her now budding and blooming love, had caused the man to be almost forgotten by the young girl, or, at least, to only push his recollection upon her in the shape of a sickening dream, or disagreeable souvenir of something horrible but past. But now he again appeared in all his disgusting and hideous familiarity, built, so Helen thought, upon the consciousness of his power. Her noble, her splendid lover had disappeared, the idol of her heart, her defender, her chieftain was gone as in the dream and the venomous monster with the body of a toad and the face of a man stood in his place. It was only by a great effort that she could invite her visitor to enter the room. Her visible efforts to restrain a certain involuntary tendency to sob hysterically, almost to scream, were only barely successful. Mr. Bloodstone saw the lady's agitation, but without remarking upon it.

"Good-morning, Miss Graham," he said, in his everlasting high and harsh key, a sort of business voice, that had always been to Helen one of his most repulsive peculiarities; "you are looking just as beautiful as ever."

The intended compliment, though she had heard it a hundred



times from him, never had so jarred and grated upon her mind as now. It shocked her almost, as would a ribald or an immodest speech made to a wife. She wished compliments from none now in the world, since her Harry loved her, and above all, from this most odious and hateful of men.

"Good-morning, Mr. Bloodstone," she said, with a strong effort to appear at ease. "Do you come from the mine?"

"Yes," he answered; "I wish I didn't."

"Is there anything wrong, then?" she inquired, anxiously, thinking of her father and the constantly present danger that is never to be separated from working in the bowels of the earth. "There has been no accident, I hope."

"No; nothing special, except the general accident of our digging down in the ground where there was no silver ore. The accident of guessing the wrong spot. That is a bad enough accident. It is an accident that has cost me a hundred and fifty thousand dollars in hard cash."

Helen made no reply to this remark; there was indeed none for her to make. She was not conscious of having been to blame for the unfortunate mischance that had been so disastrous to Mr. Bloodstone. But saying so would, she knew, avail nothing; so she remained silent.

"It is very hard," he continued, "for a gentleman of fortune to waste it all for the benefit of other people, and then to get nothing in return from them, — not even their gratitude."

This latter part of the sentence he finished with considerable emphasis, and looking hard at Helen. The wolf was roiling the water as it floated down to the lamb he intended to devour.

"I hope that my father is not ungrateful for any favors you may have extended to him, Mr. Bloodstone?"

"No; your father is not an ungrateful man, Miss Graham; I cannot say that, and I will not say it. But it is not of him that I speak."

Helen trembled; she felt, she did not know why, that she was in some way in the man's power. She had known from the first to whom he had referred, but she still refused to understand, in the vain hope that her fears had been exaggerated, and that she would yet escape. Even now, she could not summon the breath to ask him who had been ungrateful. She waited, and he spoke. The brook that lay between them was not yet muddy enough to justify his intended spring at the lamb's throat. He would give it another stir.

"Miss Graham, I came up here more than a year ago, after, as you know, I had made you an offer of marriage. I came up here, as your own sense will tell you, because I was in love with you, and wanted to marry you. I did not know anything about your father, and I did not care anything about him ; but I came up here and hunted him up, and how did I find him ? Why, I found him over head and ears in debt. He owed everybody in the Territory, from the butcher that sold him beef, up to the foundry-man that had made his steam engines and machinery. He couldn't have gone on a week longer without being in the hands of the sheriff. What did I do, Miss Graham, just on account of my love for you ? You know what I did, just as well as you know why I did it. Do you not ?"

Helen only stared vacantly at his hard, inflexible face. She could not answer.

"Well, then, if you don't, I'll tell you. I stepped in and paid his debts, and set him on his legs again. Then I took hold of the mine, and I put my money into it, all for your sake. Maybe you'll ask how much of my money I put into that mine for you. I'll tell you that, too, — I put one hundred and fifty thousand hard dollars into it. Would I have put one hundred and fifty thousand copper cents into that mine for your father ? No, not one copper cent. I cared nothing for him, — I knew nothing about him. Do you know how much is one hundred and fifty thousand dollars, Miss Graham ?"

Again no answer from Helen. She sat like the statue of despair, only looking at his face.

"Well, I should think you couldn't tell how much it was, for it's a great deal of money. Now, Miss Graham, I have gone on, holding up this load on my back, till I don't want to do it any longer, unless my kindness is at least acknowledged for something."

Here he stopped, and looked at her.

"My money is not all gone, miss. There is more where that came from. But I don't feel like flinging any more of my coin into that sink-hole up there on the hill, without there is some little gratitude shown for favors past."

Helen's lips moved.

"Is my father ungrateful, Mr. Bloodstone ?" she murmured.

"No, Miss Graham ; as I told you before, he is not. I will give the devil his due ; he is not ungrateful. He is very grateful, and wants things to go a little to please me ; but it is his family that he can't control, miss ; there is the trouble. He

lacks courage. I've told him, time and again, to come down here and be a man in his own house ; to kick the set of gamblers and stage-drivers that hang about his door into the street, and put gentlemen into their places, as he could do if he would try."

The fire mounted to Helen's face now, and she half-rose from her seat ; her cheeks and eyes were in a blaze, but it was only for an instant ; and then she sat down again, and the same wan, hopeless, helpless look came over her. What could she do to help herself, with her poor, heart-broken father, as she knew too well he was, while in this creature's power.

"What would you have me do, Mr. Bloodstone ?" she asked at last, and in a sinking voice.

"I would have you follow your father's wishes. He knows what is good for you, much better than you know yourself, — fathers always do. You are very young, Miss Graham, and don't know the ways of the world. In a new country like this, especially, young girls never know what is best for them. They should always obey their parents. I would have you do as your father wants you to do."

"I always do as my father wishes me to do, Mr. Bloodstone ; I always have obeyed him, and always intend to do so. But he has never spoken to me on the subject to which you refer. He has only to breathe his wishes, and I am ready to follow them."

"Are you, though ?" asked Bloodstone, with a triumphant air. "Well, now, that is pleasant to hear ; I am glad to see you taking a sensible and prudent view of things. Will you have the goodness to read that note, Miss Graham ?"

Here he took from his breast-pocket a letter-case, and from it handed Helen a note. She took it in her hand, and held it a moment ; then she grew more than ever deathly pale, and it slipped from her fingers, and fell upon the floor. Bloodstone thought she was going to faint, and made a movement to seek restoratives ; but she rallied, and made an effort to recover the letter. He stooped, and picked it up for her.

"It is from your own father, Miss Graham, and will do you no harm."

She opened it, and tried to read, but a mist seemed to spread itself over the page. She held her handkerchief to her eyes for a moment, as if to cool them ; then she read the letter, growing, as Bloodstone could see, more wretched and woe-begone, as she perused it. It was dated ten days back, and was

written and signed by her father. There could be no mistaking the handwriting. Bloodstone had been carrying it all of this time, waiting for a suitable opportunity to deliver it.

“MY DARLING DAUGHTER,—I have in the course of my past troubles come under great financial obligations to Mr. Bloodstone ; obligations that, at the time, I believed I should be able to repay in kind. In this, I have been disappointed, as I have been disappointed in almost everything I have undertaken. These favors were extended by him to me, with a hope on his part, understood by me at the time, that by doing so he might possibly win your good opinion, and finally your love. I, your father, ought not to have accepted assistance from Mr. Bloodstone under such circumstances ; but I have done so, and now the false step is beyond my power to retrace. For this I ask your pardon, my precious child. I have bitterly repented it from the moment it was done, and beseech you not to be as hard with me as I know I deserve. Mr. Bloodstone has proved himself to be an honest and upright man ; and it is your father who has been guilty of an injustice that closely resembles a fraud. My daughter, I cannot ask you to do violence to your feelings, whatever they may be ; but if you can consent to give your hand to Mr. Bloodstone, you will have, I truly believe, a good husband, and will, at the same time, save your already ruined father from the additional humiliation of what he feels to be a merited disgrace.”

The room grew dark when the wretched girl commenced to grope her way through her father's letter. It was as if a cloud had obscured the sun ; and as she progressed, a mist continually floated before her eyes and hid the lines. She stopped and cooled them and cleared away the obscurity with her handkerchief, pressing it against them from time to time, and so reading slowly on to the end. But even when it was finished, she could not for a long time take her eyes from the paper, but held it as if still reading. She could not realize that her father, her dear, tender, loving father had written such a letter to her. But there it was, in her hands, before her throbbing eyes. It could not be mistaken or misunderstood ; it was only too plain and clear. Jephtha had vowed a vow, and his only daughter had come forth from the doors of his house to meet him. This was the sentence for her death. The black curtain was slowly descending to shut out from her eyes the fairy island of her dream,

leaving only the monster in the foreground. But, desolate as she felt her heart each moment growing, she never once doubted of what her conduct would be. Jephtha had spoken and could not go back ; he had vowed a vow and he should do unto his darling according to that which had proceeded out of his mouth ; when the altar was prepared the victim should surely be ready. She folded the letter slowly up, and turned to Mr. Bloodstone, but without speaking. She did not seem to be willing to trust herself with words. Observing her continued silence, the superintendent spoke.

"Now you know your father's wishes, Miss Graham," he said, speaking in his usual harsh, business voice, "what do you say to it? You see how I have been spending my money just like water for you, till I can't spend any more. Now I have begun to inquire around to know when my turn is to come. I don't feel like being always squeezed by the Graham family like a second-hand lemon, and then thrown away when there is no more juice in me. So I have stopped just to inquire what Bloodstone is going to get by all of this outlay."

Helen listened to this tirade, spoken in a blustering manner, still without answering. He had evidently determined to carry things with a high hand.

"You have read your father's letter, — what do you intend to do?" he asked, rising, and walking up and down the room.

"What do you wish me to do, Mr. Bloodstone?" she asked, in a faint voice, scarcely above a whisper.

He stopped in front of the sofa on which she was seated, and looked at her. Then he repeated her words.

"What do I wish you to do? why, you know well enough. I want you to think well of me, — to like me ; to look on me as a friend, you know."

All this was said hesitatingly, as if leading to something else.

"I want you too, to love me, and then I want you to marry me. That's what I want ; and I don't think there is anything wonderful in that, after the money I've spent for you."

And here Mr. Bloodstone resumed his walk, repeating the old story about his exertions and outlay for, and on behalf of her father, and how and why he had made the expenditure of time and money from the commencement to the end. When he had finished, he again stood in front of Helen.

"I will perform," she said, "as many of the things you have asked of me as lies within my power. I cannot do them all, — but I will try, since it appears to be my father's wish."

"Will you?" he asked; "what part of them will you do?"

Helen almost choked in speaking; but she spoke at last, and distinctly.

"I will marry you, Mr. Bloodstone."

"Will you?" he asked, eagerly.

"I will," she said.

"Now you are talking like a sensible girl," he cried, sitting hastily down in his chair, "and I am sure we shall get along splendidly. And we are engaged to be married. Isn't it splendid. Give me a kiss on that;" and he put his face towards hers for that purpose.

Helen recoiled as though from the approaching head of some venomous reptile about to sting her. She sprang out of her seat and moved away, apparently in search of a place of safety. Turning at the centre of the room, she faced about with a look of scorn that was unutterable. Bloodstone thought he had never seen her look so tall by three inches, and his eyes involuntarily sought the floor at her feet to ascertain if she was not standing upon some elevated point.

"Mr. Bloodstone," she said, "in obedience to my father's wishes, I have told you that I will marry you. Had that letter contained a request from him, couched in similar terms, for me to throw myself from that window, I would have been at this moment lying lifeless in the street."

Here she approached one step nearer to Enoch Bloodstone, and continued,—

"And I wish that had been its contents instead of a mandate to become your wife. I will obey my father and marry you, but, until that time, I wish to see as little of you as possible. This is a sacrifice I am making of myself, Mr. Bloodstone, and your rights will commence when we are married. Have you any thing further to say to me, sir."

"Oh, dear, dear," cried Mr. Bloodstone, with an effort to look good-natured; "haven't you got your back up, though. Don't fret yourself, Miss Graham; you will come around all right in time. You think now that you don't like it; but that's only sentiment,—that's all,—you will soon come out of that. All girls are sentimental at your age. You'll see things in a different light when you are married. I can afford to wait till you come to your senses."

Helen sat down in her chair again and burst into tears. Her pride had blazed out for a moment, and now the flame had burnt down. Her gentle nature came again to her, and she saw her

own woman's helplessness to rescue herself from the fate that had so remorselessly swallowed her up.

Enoch Bloodstone stood over her with a triumphant smile.

"Oh, Mr. Bloodstone," she said at last, between her convulsive sobs, "pity me! I will do as my father wishes me to do — as you wish me to do. I am not disobedient. But I do not love you. I cannot love you. You are rich. You can marry almost whom you please. Do not take advantage of our misfortunes, of my poor father's troubles, to force me to wed you. You have been kind, good, generous, noble to my father. I am sure you have, for he says you have. Do be yourself once more, and pity a poor stricken girl that is at your feet," and here Helen sank upon her knees and held her hands towards him imploringly. "Do not force her to a marriage that is to her worse than death itself. I will be grateful to you as long as I live; only be generous and do not ask me to become your wife." She reached out her hands as if to clasp his knees in the fervor of her supplication, seeing which he stepped hastily back, causing her to lose her balance, and she fell forward upon her face on the floor.

"Come, come!" he said, in his harsh way. "I did not come here to hear a woman's prayers, nor to see her tears. I am here on business."

Helen at this rose up, as well as she could, and resumed her place on the sofa.

"I came here, Miss Graham, with a letter from your father, which contained, I believe, his views on this affair. He knows what I have spent already, and what it will be necessary for me to spend hereafter to pull him through the mine. I can be disposed of by just two words. I think I have some claim on the family, some little claim upon you. If the family thinks I am wrong, then all they have to do is to say so and I am off directly. I have always told you that I want to marry you. I am not a sentimental man, but a business man. I don't know anything about blighted hopes, and gloomy future, and that sort of nonsense that school girls talk so much about. I came here as a single man, a man that understands business, to offer marriage to you. It so happens that your father desires you to marry me. Well, if you want to fall into your father's notions, all you have to do is to say so. If not, why in ten minutes I will be up at the office, and tell him that his daughter has objections of a sentimental nature to complying with his wishes. Then he and I will have a little settlement of our business ac-

counts, and there the matter ends. What becomes of him and his debts after that is no affair of mine. You know that I will have done my best to help him, and will have failed only because you have too much sentiment to aid me in the business." Here he took his hat and came again in front of Helen. "Miss Graham, I am now going to the mine, and would like to be able to tell your father just how matters are between us. I will stand by him in his troubles, if his daughter will be willing to do the same. His fate therefore rests with you. Will you be my wife — yes or no?"

"I told you, Mr. Bloodstone, before that I would be your wife if it was my father's wish, and I will do so."

"Very good! Then it is understood between us. Good-afternoon, Miss Graham," and he walked deliberately to the door and departed.

Helen rose up and left the room, but not to go to her mother. That tender heart was already too nearly broken to undergo this new grief. She went to her own room and threw herself upon her bed, and sobbed for half an hour without intermission. Then she rose and dried her eyes as carefully as she could, and went to see if her mother needed her attention.



## CHAPTER XXI.

### JOY IN NO. 16, AMERICAN EAGLE HOTEL.

WHEN Helen again entered her mother's room she found her sleeping. But the sleep of invalids is seldom deep. She started up at once, and spoke.

"Is that you, Baby?"

"Yes, mother dear."

"Where have you been for so long a time?"

"Mr. Bloodstone remained a great while, mother, and has only just gone."

"Was it Mr. Bloodstone that called, darling? I thought you said that it was Mr. Stacey."

"No, mamma, I did not say so. Mr. Stacey called some



time before Mr. Bloodstone, but he only waited a few minutes and then went away. Mr. Bloodstone has been in the parlor nearly all the afternoon."

Matilda was confused in her mind, and could not just understand it. She thought that Mr. Stacey had been with her daughter, and told her that he loved her.

"I must have dreamed it," she thought, "but it was a beautiful dream at least." Looking hard at Helen she thought that she saw a change in her appearance.

"You are not well, Baby," she said. "Your eyes look red and your cheeks have no color; they seem like wax. What ails you, my precious?"

"Nothing, dear mamma; what puts such a whim in your head? I was never better in my life."

"I fear you are wasting away here, darling, watching over your mother. You do not take the air, and your eyes are red as if you had been weeping."

"No, no, mamma!" answered Helen, with an air of affected gayety. "Mr. Bloodstone went away and left me a while ago, and I have been sitting at my window ever since looking at the Sugar-loaf, and the mountains and valleys beyond, till I have strained them. That is all. Why, I never do such a foolish thing as to cry. I am a woman now, you know. I am no longer little Helen. You are so much in the habit of calling me your Baby that you cannot divest yourself of the idea that I am still an infant."

"Ah, dear, it is just that," answered the mother; "it is because you are a woman that I do readily suspect you of having indulged in a woman's comfort in adversity — tears. It is not children that weep, but women, my darling Baby."

"Yes, mother, but I have nothing to weep about, and surely even women must have a cause before the tears will come to them."

"Have you nothing to make you shed tears, Helen? Then I am glad to see you keep up your spirits so well, for it appears to me that we all have enough to make us cry till we are blind."

"Ah, no, mother, you are now thinking of the silver lode that will be stubborn and go and hide itself away in the mountain and not come out and yield to us its treasures. But that will soon come all right. Mr. Bloodstone was just here talking about it. I am quite sure, from what he tells me, that all will be well in the end, and that in a very short time."

"I am thinking of your poor father, my precious Baby, who is so changed with his troubles that he does not seem to me any longer to be the dear husband he once was. He was not always so grudging of his smiles. In better days he had a kind word and a kiss for us all when he came into the house, and once within he never seemed to want to leave it again. Now he has not time to spend a moment with us, except the few hours he spends in his bed, not devoted to sleep, for he never sleeps. Why does he not share his sorrows with those who love him, instead of keeping the secret of his troubles to himself as if it were some horrible crime?" and the sorrowing wife and mother burst into tears and turned her face to the wall. "He does not love us any more, and we may as well die and release him from the trouble of providing for us."

"Oh, mamma," cried Helen, throwing her arms around her mother, "you have wholly misunderstood him; he does love us as well as ever. But he has had something upon his mind for a long time past, that he could not tell us of at the moment, but which he will soon confide to us freely. This secret trouble that has been upon his mind has now been all overcome and disposed of. It will trouble him no more. He has told me all about it, but it is a long story, and concerns chiefly the mine and his financial embarrassments, and I will not trouble you with it to-day; but, dear mamma, believe me that it is all as completely past, as if it had never existed. You will see when he comes home to dinner, if he is not quite come back to his dear, old, loving self again. Now don't grieve, dear, darling, sweet mother, but just wait till he comes in this evening, and see if I have not told you the truth."

The invalid was comforted with this assurance, and dried her tears.

"I will sit here by the window," said Helen, "and watch for him as he comes along the street. It is almost time for him to be home;" and she sat down, but only to wait a minute, when she saw, as she expected, her father coming slowly from the direction of the mine. "Here he is, mamma; I knew he would come soon, and he sees me, and is already smiling and throwing me a kiss. Oh, he is himself again, as I told you he would be."

That her father had seen her and thrown her a kiss, was an invention of Helen's, for he was coming slowly, with his head down, as if buried beneath a great load of sorrow.

"I will run and meet him at the head of the stairs ;" and she tripped away, as if she was the happiest creature in the world.

As she passed through the door, she warbled a measure of some popular air so joyously, that her mother turned her head and looked after her, and thought of her dream about Henry Stacey telling her Baby that he loved her. But she could not keep up the song. It died in her throat as she passed into the hall, and when she reached the head of the stairs she could barely summon a faint smile to greet her approaching father. But this was indeed a surprise to him. He could scarcely believe his eyes. Observing his wondering expression, she made an effort, and more completely imposed upon him.

"Oh dear papa," she cried, dancing and clapping her hands, "we are so glad you have come home early, we have so many things to tell you. We have had letters from Blanche McIver, and from everybody that we love ; come in quickly and read them."

And she took his hand in hers, and passed her arm round his waist, and led him to the door. But before entering the room, she stopped him, and said, —

"Dear papa, why did you not tell me all long ago? Why did you not tell me before, that you wished me to marry Mr. Bloodstone? If you had done so, it would have saved you and all of us a world of trouble. I am very happy to be able to help you ;" and here her voice trembled just a little ; "especially, as I assure my own happiness at the same time."

Mr. Graham looked hard at his daughter for a moment. He could not believe his ears.

"Helen," he asked, "will this marriage make you happy?"

"Yes, dear papa," she answered, "it will make me very, very happy indeed ;" and she kissed her father on both cheeks.

"My daughter," he said, hesitatingly, "I thought you did not love Mr. Bloodstone ; indeed, I thought that you could not endure him, — so you told me once."

"Oh, yes, dear papa ; but that, you know, was long ago, before he had been so good and kind to you, and before I knew him so well as I do now. I was a foolish, young thing then, full of all sorts of girlish notions got from novels and poems, and I did not know what was best for me. But I hope, dear papa, that I have outgrown all such nonsense now ; don't you ?" she asked, patting his cheek.

"Helen," he said, "tell me truly, do you say that you love Mr. Enoch Bloodstone?"

She hesitated a moment, and the haze came before her eyes once more. The black drop-curtain of her dream slowly sank down before her; and as it fell, all the bright day-dreams, the hopes and the joys of a sweet girlhood, its meadows and lakes, its green trees and purling brooks, were one by one shut out from her; at last the fairy island, the spreading palms, and fragrant flowers were gone, and all was black and desolate.

"Yes, papa," she answered slowly and deliberately, "I love him."

Mr. Graham gazed a moment at his daughter, while he stroked her beautiful yellow hair; then, with a long sigh, he stooped down and kissed her forehead, and they went in together.

"See, dear mamma," she cried, running ahead of her father, and pulling him into her mother's room, "here he is, happy and gay, as in old times. It is all over now. The secret is out, and it has not been so terrible, after all."

Mr. Graham embraced his wife affectionately, as she stood at the side of the bed whence she had risen in her joy at hearing his footsteps.

"What is the secret, Edmond?" she asked. "Helen says that you have had a secret grief that she has discovered, and which you had concealed from us. We have observed your changed manner of late, and have both been anxious about you. What have you had on your mind, my love? Tell me!"

Mr. Graham did not answer; he seemed unable to speak, from surprise or agitation.

"I will tell you, dear mamma: I have had a suitor for a long time, — a suitor, about whom papa has been very uneasy, not knowing just what the gentleman's intentions were, nor what were my own wishes. Well, now it is all over. The gentleman has called to see me; has proposed, and been accepted."

"What, Helen!" cried Matilda, in astonishment, "have you accepted an offer of marriage?"

✓ "Yes, mamma, I am now engaged to be married to Mr. Enoch Bloodstone."

Poor Helen seemed to be anxious to get the secret out as soon as possible; she did not even wait for her mother's next and natural question, as to who the affianced lover was. It was as

though she were in dread that her own resolution would fail her, if she did not have more witnesses to the engagement.

"To Enoch Bloodstone!" groaned her mother. "To that man! Helen, are you going to marry that creature?"

"Why, mamma, you sha'n't talk so about my future husband; now don't."

Mr. Graham had stood all of this time in complete silence, and even now he could not summon courage to speak.

"O Baby!" cried her mother, bursting into a flood of tears, with her face to Helen's bosom, "are you going to marry Mr. Bloodstone?"

She could say no more for several minutes, but continued sobbing upon her daughter's breast. At last, she made an effort.

"Pardon your poor, weak, foolish mother for speaking in this manner about your future husband; it is only my weakness, darling Baby," she said; "perhaps I should have done in the same way, no matter to whom you had been engaged. Perhaps it is the idea of your marrying at all that grieves me. Do you love Mr. Bloodstone, darling?" she said at last.

"Yes, dear mamma, of course I do, or I should never have accepted him."

"Well, then, dear, forgive me, and God grant that you may be happy in your marriage;" and Matilda kissed her daughter, and blessed her. "Help me to dress, Baby, and I will go with you into the parlor."

"Yes, dear mamma, do come with us into the parlor, and let us be happy once more."

Matilda was soon, by Helen's assistance, prepared to rise. They went into the parlor, and as it was growing dark they lighted the lamps.

"Let us all dine in our own room together, instead of going down to the public table," cried Helen; "it will be a regular celebration of my engagement."

It was agreed to, though the matter was no easy one to accomplish. In Western hotels, the habit of all dining at one table, in public, is so thoroughly established, that each infringement of the rule is a domestic revolution in itself. The servants are always kept down to a number so low, that no experiment can be made without throwing the whole machinery of the house out of order. But Helen was such a general favorite with all the servants in the hotel, up-stairs and down, that she managed the matter with wonderful success. The cook was soon

conciliated when told that the golden-haired beauty of No. 16 desired it, and said that she should have the best dinner that could be had in the town.

While this matter was under discussion, the stage from over the mountains was heard to drive up to the main door of the hotel, and directly after, the heavy steps of Jack Gowdy came tramping along the hall.

"Good-luck to all here," he cried, bursting open the door, and pushing it in with his foot. "There is something for you, Miss Helen," said he, setting down a rough willow hamper that was as much as he could hold in his arms; "that, I should judge, would be likely to make your eyes stick out, when you come to see it."

"How do you do, Jack," cried Helen, rushing up, and seizing him by the hand. "What have you brought for me now, you dear old fellow?"

He removed the cover of the hamper, and held up by the head an immense fish, so long that its tail trailed upon the floor, while its head was as high as Jack's waist.

"There," said he, "that, I reckon, is the finest trout that ever came out of honest old John Bigler's lake; if it isn't, then call me a blue-bellied Yankee, or a Chinaman, or a Digger Injin, at your own free will and choice."

"A Lake Bigler trout!" cried Helen; "where did you get him, Jack?"

"Well, miss," said the stage-driver, sitting down on the edge of the hamper, "I was driving along the shore of the lake, pretty lively, coming down, when I saw an Injin struggling with this fellow, in the water. He had him on the end of his spear and it was a pretty tight struggle betwixt them. Well, I just stopped to see how the thing would terminate, not that I cared particular which way, but just to see the fun. The red-skin got the best of the fight, and fetched the minnow ashore. My first impulse, of course, was just to take down my six-shooter, buy the fish on the spot, and settle with the savage by sending a bullet through his midriff. Well, miss, if I'd intended that trout for my own eating, that's just what I'd have done."

"Oh! Jack, how could you?" interposed Helen.

"Well. I didn't," he continued, "and I didn't, just because I thought of fetching it to you, and I know'd you had scruples on that point, which, not knowing red-skins as I do, is only natural for you to have. So I put up my fire-arms and bought that fish for a dollar, though it wasn't worth, honestly, but four bits. So

much, you see, for people's prejudices. I allowed that Injin to go on in his depredations, and I suppose he will pay me by running me over the bank some night, or scalping me the first time he catches me outside of the settlements."

"I hope not, Jack," said Helen; "it would be a cruel recompense for your kindness."

"Good-evening, Mr. Graham," said the stage-driver, addressing that gentleman for the first time; "how does the mine get on? Have you struck pay-rock yet?"

"Not yet, Jack," he answered, "but we hope to do so now very soon."

"Mining is an awful treacherous business, Mr. Graham, in all respects. I sometimes think that nature never intended mankind to excavate the bowels of the earth. The ground never deceives a man who stays outside of it. The farmer can always depend upon it to bring him crops of the same sort that he puts in, and stage-drivers never fail to find hard ground somewhere under them when they drive horses over it. But, when you get inside of it, then it's treacherous. It's only the bowels of the earth that ever cheats a man. He can't be always sure of a grave under the ground, when he is dead. The Indians, if they can get hold of you out here on the plains, just burn you up in a grease-wood fire, and your ashes are scattered to the winds. You can't depend, even, on getting under the ground to be buried, it's so treacherous. Where are you digging now, Mr. Graham?"

"We are about to finish work in the fifth level, and, if we do not make any discoveries, will, in a few days, sink again and try a sixth still lower."

"That's odd," said Jack, musingly, "everybody has struck it on the Comstock but you."

"Yes, nearly all, Jack."

"And you haven't got a sign?"

"No, not yet."

"Has that other mine in front of you found anything?"

"The Pactolus?"

"Yes, the Pactolus, — that big San Francisco man's mine."

"No, not yet, that I have heard of."

"Well, that is curious," said Jack, musingly; "maybe you don't change your people often enough. You know those old miners never allow the same people around more than a month or so at a time. They change 'em, you know."

"Yes, Jack, that they do, and very unjustly. It is wrong to

throw men out of employment on the bare suspicion of dishonesty. Besides, I know my people to be honest."

"Whew," whistled Jack, "you know your people to be honest. This thing looks worse than I thought. Why, sir, you ought to be turned over to the public administration. You need a guardian; indeed you do. You need one badly."

Mr. Graham smiled at Jack's outburst.

"Do you think so?" he asked, pleasantly.

✓ "Why, I don't think anything about it. I know it. Why, sir, those fellows will steal the hair off of your head. There isn't anything on top of ground that them mining superintendents and directors won't steal, or, if there is, it's because they haven't heard of it and don't know where it is. As soon as they do hear of it, they will go for it quick enough. You bet your life they will. Why, sir, a mining director, or a superintendent, and it's all the same, would steal the acorns from a blind hog. So you just look out. They would steal the whole Territory of Washoe, if they could get their claws under it once. They would just lift it clear off the hooks and run away with it. Take my advice and change your managers, change your foremen, change your engineers, change everybody; and do it often. Do it at least every Saturday night, regular. Your miners, you can turn out in squads of a quarter or so at a time, through the week, as you can get fresh ones. If you don't, they will first steal your mine, and when that is gone, they will come back and steal you. Yes, they will, sir, they will clean you out as clean as a shot-gun. I hope you'll like the fish, Miss Helen."

"Yes, Jack, I have already sent it to the kitchen to have it cooked for dinner."

"Thank you kindly," said Jack. "Good-night, miss."

Helen's apparent good spirits had completely imposed upon her father. He had no doubt that she had come into the engagement with Bloodstone willingly. It is true, it greatly surprised him. He had formed altogether a different opinion of her tastes, but he thought to himself, women are riddles, insolvable, and always have been from the beginning of the world. Besides, he reasoned, during the time she has been at the hotel, Bloodstone has spent much of his time with her, and who knows how agreeable he may have been able to make himself.

Though, under ordinary circumstances, he would have preferred that his daughter should have married a man more nearly her equal in mind as well as in education; still, the great point of her own wishes being provided for, was accomplished; and



Bloodstone, as the world went, was not such a bad match, after all. He was, at least, a man of fortune, and if Helen was satisfied, of course her family must be so. But poor Matilda was not so easily reconciled; she could not understand it. Women know each other better than men can understand them. She felt that Bloodstone could never be a companion for Helen, and she could not see how her daughter had brought herself to think he could be. But by the time dinner came and was served in the parlor, the wonder of the thing was already passing from the minds of the parents, and they were already beginning to accept it as a fact, even if they could not quite bring themselves to rejoice at their daughter's engagement.

Helen had, from the first, stipulated that the intended marriage was to be kept a secret in the family. No one was to know of it except the parties immediately interested. This was to be enjoined upon Mr. Bloodstone in the morning, she said, as soon as he was seen, she having forgotten to mention it to him at the time of the engagement. Her reason for this, was their peculiar situation at the hotel, where they knew no one. "To tell it," she said, "is but to gratify the curiosity of gaping strangers, who do not know or care for us or our plans of life. Had we friends, who would rejoice at our good or ill fortune, who would make merry when we make merry, and mourn when we mourn, we might wish to have their participation in this happy event. But we have not, and we will keep it secret." In the course of the dinner, all of this was settled upon. If Mr. Graham saw Bloodstone first in the morning, he was to mention this matter of detail, but if he came to the rooms first, then Helen was to do so. When dinner was over, Helen went to the piano, and played and sang for her father and mother. Charley Hunter came in and turned the music for her. The boy had become a favorite in the family; Helen always called him her little beau. He was a manly lad, of good temper and gentle breeding. The discussion of the proposed marriage had been finished when he entered, and was not referred to in his presence. Helen sang all of her old music, even to her little baby songs and nursery rhymes that not been heard before in the Graham family circle since the time when it had been all together by the banks of the Delaware. The father and mother sat on the sofa hand in hand. Matilda was almost herself again; she had now her husband back to her heart once more, and the invalid felt health again blooming in her cheeks. At times, but only for a

moment, tears of joy would course down her cheeks. But then she would remember that it was Enoch Bloodstone who had won the prize she thought so precious, and a shudder of dismay would run through her delicate frame. She could not reconcile herself to the man, and the fact that her daughter had chosen him, was to her an inexplicable mystery. How could she love that man? that disagreeable, that vulgar man? she asked herself. Had there been anything savoring of regret or unwillingness in Helen's manner, her mother would have suspected her secret, that she was being wedded, not won. But was she not sitting at the piano at that moment singing Robin Adair, and singing it as her mother thought none save her darling daughter and the angels above could sing it, and without a sigh, a tear, or the dropping of a note? Was it in the power of her daughter to sing Robin Adair without showing some signs of woe, if any were concealed in her heart? If a stone lay at the bottom of her soul, the music of the plaintive old song would surely move it, and a bubble would rise to the surface, and betray the spot. She watched her darling,—her bosom and her eyes,—but no sign came. The song was ended; Charley Hunter withdrew, and Helen came and sat between them on the sofa.

"Dear papa," she said, taking his hand, "when Mr. Bloodstone asks me to fix the day for our marriage, which I suppose he will do the next time he calls, I think I would prefer to have it at as early a day as possible. We are such strangers here, that no preparations will be necessary. You know a contemplated marriage is always such a grand event in a house, that it takes entire possession, to the exclusion of all other matters. Nothing else can ever be thought of till that is out of the way; and I think it would be well to have it over and done with, as soon as possible."

"Why, our Baby is anxious to leave us," interposed the mother.

Helen started as if a sudden pain had shot through her heart.

"Leave you," she said; "no, mamma, I shall not leave you; I shall not consent to that;" and then, after a moment's consideration, she added, "I don't think Mr. Bloodstone will want me to leave you. I certainly shall not do it, if he does wish it."

"Once married, my darling, you are no longer mistress of yourself. You can't tell what you will do."

"I am quite sure Mr. Bloodstone will not ask that, mother,"

replied Helen, firmly ; "at least, not while you remain in infirm health. But do not let us think of that, mamma," she cried gayly ; "this evening was devoted to celebrating the engagement, and we will not think of the dark side of matrimony, if it has such a side. It is now time to go to bed. To-morrow, we will talk of the details ; so good-night, papa and mamma."

They kissed their daughter, and she withdrew to her own room. She fled from them, for she felt that she was no longer equal to her task. Each moment, a sinking sensation in her breast admonished her that if she remained longer in the presence of her father and mother, all would be betrayed. She softly turned the key in her door, and reaching her bed, managed to lay herself down. She could not undress, but lay moaning upon the outside of the bed. Even tears would not now come to her relief ; and so she passed the night. In the morning, Helen rose at the usual time ; she had not slept ; she looked at herself in the glass, and saw that she was fearfully haggard. She sat down for a moment, upon her chair, and reflected. This will not do, she thought ; I must perform my duty. If my poor mother suspects that I am not happy, it will kill her ; and my father ; what will become of him ? She made a fresh resolve, bathed her face and temples, adjusted her dress, and went to see her mother.

"Good-morning, mamma," she said, pleasantly, and kissed her.

"Helen, you look wretched ; you have not slept, dear. Are you not ill ?"

"No, dear mother ; but an engagement to marry is a very serious matter, you know ; and I fear that I have allowed it to keep me awake. Did you sleep the first night of your engagement to papa ?" she asked, with a laugh.

"No, dear, I did not ; but I don't think the loss of sleep affected me as it appears to be affecting you."

"I suppose I am foolish to think so much of it. Everybody must be married some time ; and why not I ? Has papa been gone long ?"

"Yes, Baby ; he has been away an hour. He thinks of nothing but the mine, and cannot endure to be away from it a moment."

At ten o'clock, Mr. Bloodstone called. Helen was alone. She received him politely, but coldly.

"I am glad to hear, Miss Graham, from your father, of what I

take to be a disposition on your part to come down to the surface of the earth once more. You were altogether in the clouds when I was here yesterday."

"If by coming down to the surface of the earth, you refer to my intension to obey the wishes of my father in marrying you, Mr. Bloodstone, I have never left it for a single moment; I have always expected to do as he wished in the matter. I told you so yesterday."

"Yes, Miss Graham, but your father brings me the very agreeable intelligence, that I am not only to possess your hand, but that I have also the greater bliss of having won your heart also. That was something I had not counted upon quite so soon, though I had always known it would come in time."

"Mr. Bloodstone, don't let us deceive each other. It appears that we are to be married. When that event comes, I shall try to do my duty as a wife, as I now try to do it as a daughter. I do not love you, and if I dared to give expression to a feeling which towards an intended husband I feel to be wicked, I should say that I hate you, that I detest and despise you, but I will not say that I do, and I will try not to do it. I shall marry you because you have contrived to compel me to marry you. You have obtained such a hold upon my father that he asks it of me, and has caused me to think that his honor, which to him is his life, depends upon this sacrifice. I have pretended to my parents that I love you. I have done this for many reasons. I think it my duty to do it, and above all things because my precious mother is failing in her health day by day under the load of our troubles, and because I think the knowledge of this new grief would kill her; but understand me, Mr. Bloodstone, I marry you because my father wishes it. He must give me away at the altar. Should he see cause to withdraw his consent between this time and the day of our marriage, I shall not consider myself bound; you have wooed me through him, and you must retain his good-will, at least, until the ceremony is completed."

"Well, well," he answered, "it is pleasant to have a full understanding on such matters; that is what I call business, and that I always like. I know that when you are married you will love me, and I can afford to wait. I don't marry you for love; I marry you because you are the handsomest woman that ever was in this country, and every one knows it. I want to show that I can get a fine woman as well as other men. That's my hand."

To this Helen made no reply. "One thing, Mr. Bloodstone, I stipulate for; our engagement is to be kept a secret till the moment of marriage, and the marriage itself is to be strictly private; my father and two witnesses, are alone to be present."

"Well, I see no particular objection to that," he answered. "When can I hope to have the happy event come off?"

"That I will decide upon to-day," she answered, "with my mother. Do not fear, Mr. Bloodstone, it will be soon enough. Any procrastination that I might ask for and obtain, would only cause my parents to doubt my willingness to marry you, and I have resolved that they shall never have that additional sorrow to bear. It will take place much sooner than I would think of consenting to, were the marriage one of my own choice. Are you satisfied, Mr. Bloodstone?"

"I would be very hard to please, if I were not," he answered.

"Very well, sir, then I hope you will excuse me, for I must go to my mother; good-morning, sir."

"Good-morning, Miss Graham," he said, and took himself away.

Helen rang the bell, and set about giving directions for the morning repast of the invalid.



## CHAPTER XXII.

### AN OLD LOVER IS SENT ABOUT HIS BUSINESS.

THE heavy task of Helen Graham was only in part accomplished, when she had convinced her father and her mother that she was happy in her engagement to Enoch Bloodstone. There was another and more terrible ordeal for her widowed heart to pass through. Henry Stacey was yet to be answered, and his visit was due at any moment. Once, and no long time ago, she could have met him proudly, and could have told him in cold and measured terms, that she had bestowed herself upon a gentleman who had payed her the compliment of offering his heart and hand. She could have even added with lofty

hauteur, that that gentleman was Enoch Bloodstone. But that time was past. Since then, Henry Stacey, in the manliness of his love, making no reservations, asking no terms, had laid his heart at her feet and had gone away leaving it there. And now he was to come back and to ask her what would she do with the offering. To a girl of Helen Graham's principles, there was but one answer to make. Her heart was breaking with grief at being forced into a life of certain misery, a future of blasted hopes and ruined aspirations. She was withal ashamed of the marriage she was about to make, well knowing that the world would pronounce it a mercenary one, and with appearances all in support of the belief, for there was nothing of sympathy between these two who were engaged. She had asked that it be kept a secret till the day it was to be completed, to the end that she might avoid the mortification of having to give answers to questions when she had none to give. But with Henry Stacey the matter was wholly different. He had earned the right to know all that she could honestly communicate to any living being. And though it tore her heart out of her breast to do it, though he should the next moment curse her and spit upon her, yet would she tell him. Her course was therefore resolved upon. To all others the secret of her intended marriage should only be broken by the public journals that would announce its solemnization. But from Henry Stacey nothing should be kept back that the future wife of another could tell. While this matter was still being revolved in her mind, Henry Stacey knocked at her door. She had heard his footsteps, so well known to her, even as with youthful elasticity he bounded through the hall below, and as he came springing up the stairs and along the passage leading to her door, the beating of her heart kept pace with the sound, and she thought almost as loud. When she looked upon his handsome, hopeful face, his eyes sparkling with joy and delight, she became more woe-begone than ever.

He saw the change in her face at a glance, and without taking the chair she offered to him, came boldly forward with all the tenderness of an accepted lover, and with the anxiety of a husband, and taking her hand asked her what had happened. "You are not well," he cried. "You do not look like the same person that I left yesterday afternoon. Surely something has occurred; what is it? How is your mother? Has anything happened to her?"

These questions followed one another so rapidly that Helen had no time to reply to any of them.

"No," she said, withdrawing her hand from his, "my mother is as well as usual; certainly she is no worse than she was yesterday. She promised to meet you to-day, but she has not been able to do it, and has asked me to present her regrets and to bid you adieu in her name."

"But yourself, Helen; you are not well, are you? You look really very pale. Tell me, has anything occurred to you?"

"No, Mr. Stacey; nothing, I assure you. I am quite as well as usual, and have nothing whatever to complain of."

Henry was forced to be satisfied with this positive denial, though his fears were even still far from being put at rest. They sat down and tried to converse, but the failure was even more marked than upon the day previous. The weather was a good enough topic while it could be made to last, but it was soon exhausted, as were all subsequent renewals of it. Each of them appeared equally to dread the subject which had drawn them together.

Harry had evidently entered the room in the firm belief that his suit was to be a successful one. His countenance radiant with pleasure, his elastic step, his pleasant, confident voice, all indicated the man who looked for no form of disappointment that day. This Helen felt, and would have fain warded off the blow, or at least, postponed it to a day more remote. But there was to be no help for it. And besides, each moment that passed, appeared to dry up and evaporate a certain amount of his hopeful spirits, until now he looked as dolorous as if he had already received the stroke of grace from the lady's hand. Indeed, he soon sank down into that frame of mind, in which he was willing to force on an answer, if only to know the worst as soon as possible. He had addressed his lady love, for so he thought her, when he entered, as Helen. He did not now dare to use that familiar name.

"Miss Graham," at last he said, in a voice as sad as if he had already known his fate, "I am going away to-day; I shall not be back again for several weeks. Would it be taking too great a liberty, if I were to pray you to remember that the heart which loves, and knows not if that love be returned, is always an aching heart. You know that I did not ask you to love me, but only if I might demand your father's consent to address you. It is true that to a lady with such principles as I believe Miss Graham to possess, there is no important differ-

ence between doing that which I have asked of you, and promising to love me outright. For I am sure you would never consent to one, unless you intended to do the other. Perhaps I have deceived myself when I imagined, as I have only done within the last week, that I saw in the conduct of Miss Graham indications that led me to hope that the little that I could offer to her, would not be rejected with scorn; that at least she would pity the passion if she was unable to reciprocate it. But I fear now that I have been too ambitious, and have been led into an error, that a lifetime of sorrow can alone atone for."

This was said in broken sentences, between which ample time was allowed for Helen to speak, but without eliciting a word from her. She could not speak. She could think of nothing to say.

At last in despair of getting a word from her, Harry continued, —

"Then, am I right Miss Graham? Am I to accept your silence as a proof of your scorn, visited upon my presumption, as well as a negative to my hopes?"

Helen looked at him imploringly, and said, —

"No, Mr. Stacey."

She could go no farther.

"But you do not love me," he cried.

She did not answer. She could not confess that she did, being engaged to marry another; and to deny it, would be to tell a falsehood.

"Will you allow me to hope, Miss Graham, that at some future time, no matter how remote, so that it is within this dreary life, I may win your love? Oh, say this!" he exclaimed, clasping his hands, "and I will serve you, toil for you, fight for you, die for you, and be happy from the moment you say this one word."

Helen now felt the necessity, as well as the duty, of speaking and putting an end to the interview. She had met Harry to give him an answer, not to hear him plead a hopeless suit. To permit that, would be to inflict a needless humiliation upon a noble heart. "No," she cried, "Mr. Stacey, I cannot, must not permit you to hope for anything, for there is no hope —" She was upon the point of saying "for us," but corrected herself, and said "for you."

"Then you love another," said Harry, almost fiercely.



For a moment she did not answer. She was selecting a formula to use in her reply.

"I am engaged to be the wife of another," she said at last, in a voice so expressive of wretchedness, that any but a rejected lover, must have observed it.

But Harry could observe nothing. He was himself too miserable, to think of the woes of another. He sank down in his chair as if the breath had been knocked out of him. The mere fact that she did not love him, did not appear serious. He had never believed that she did. He had never quite expected her to do that, even in the most sanguine moments. He had only hoped to find her heart free, and to in time so convince her of his devotion, as to obtain at last her love. But here was something he had not looked for. She was absolutely engaged to another ; she was therefore lost to him. He sat for some time in silence, resting his face in his hands, plunged in despair.

Helen was as silent as himself ; she sat as still as though willing to wait forever for him to speak.

At last he began to look back over his conduct, and to inquire of himself what he had done to deserve such misery ? For the first time in the history of his acquaintance with Helen he asserted his position in his own mind.

"Was it absurd for me to address her?" he thought. "No, it was not. I love her truly, and it was not presumptuous for me to aspire to her hand?"

He turned to her at last, with firm lips and a steady voice ; his despair was assuming something like anger. He began to feel that he had been too hardly dealt with.

"Miss Graham, will you pardon a question?"

"Any that you choose to ask, Mr. Stacey," she said in a low voice ; "I will answer anything."

"Have you ever suspected that I loved you, before my declaration to that effect made yesterday?"

"Yes, Mr. Stacey, I have."

"How long have you suspected it?"

"Only since you have been in Virginia, during this present visit."

"But you have suspected it ever since I arrived here?"

"Yes, since the very first call you made upon us ; not positively at the beginning, but more confidently each day."

"Has your bearing towards me, since my arrival, been such

as you think just, to a man who is to be rejected when he offers himself in marriage?"

"No, Mr. Stacey, I cannot say that it has been. I do not pretend that I have treated you as I ought to have done."

"Has your engagement been made public?"

"It has not, nor is it to be, until the marriage takes place."

Harry remained silent a moment, while Helen sat patiently and meekly waiting for him to continue with his questions.

"Would it be too much, were I to ask when your engagement was formed, and to whom? I do not feel that I have any right to ask this," he said, and was going to add to the admission, but she interrupted him.

"No," she said, in the same subdued voice. "You have the right to ask anything that a gentleman may ask of a lady, and receive an answer."

Here she paused, as if to summon fresh strength and courage to go on.

"I became engaged yesterday," she said.

"Before my visit was made?" he cried.

"No, Mr. Stacey, afterwards."

He sprang from his seat, and took a step towards her, as if to convince himself by actual inspection of her face, if her statement was true.

But the same sad eyes and weary look met him, that had so startled him when he entered the room, and he paused and sat down again. He now waited for the name of the gentleman to whom she was engaged, but she did not give it at the moment.

"I will not ask you to tell me his name," he said bitterly.

"It is enough for me to be struck with my own fate, without receiving the news of another's bliss to add to my chagrin."

"I said that I would tell you, Mr. Stacey, though I should tell no one else, and if you do not object, I will do so."

Harry sat with his arms folded, looking sternly at the poor girl, throwing the load of his injuries into his words when he spoke, and flashing them from his eyes at each glance.

She was long in pronouncing the name of the man to whom she was betrothed; but it came at last. "It was Mr. Enoch Bloodstone," she said, and again relapsed into a patient silence.

Harry did not start at the name; he looked at her with a puzzled look. "Enoch Bloodstone," he repeated. "Do you mean your father's superintendent?"

"The same," she answered.

He sat in silence, still regarding her. At last he spoke, —  
"He is very rich, is he not?"

"I have heard so," she answered, in a voice scarcely above a whisper; "but I do not know anything further about his circumstances than what is commonly reported."

"When did he propose to you, Miss Graham?"

"A long time ago. It is more than a year ago, before we came to Virginia."

"But you did not accept him then, Miss Graham?"

"No, I did not; I accepted him only yesterday."

Harry sat staring at the girl with a look that took in her entire form from head to foot, but dwelling upon no part of her. He could not descend to regard her face especially when all had so grievously wronged him. It was that beautiful but heartless creature who had trifled with him, amused herself, and then rejected him in favor of a vulgar blackguard, upon whom blind fortune in a freak had lavished a certain number of dollars. He saw not her crushed and disheartened bearing; her sad and hopeless look; her dejected, submitting voice. His own misery shut this all out from him. Her golden hair had not lost a tint, and even now the sun that crept in at the window, at times flashed upon and lit it up with a splendor that to poor Harry was a mockery, almost an insult.

"Why did you not accept Mr. Bloodstone when he first offered his hand, Miss Graham? Did you not then know of his wealth?"

There was a faint flash of the old fire kindled in Helen's eye by this taunt, but it only flickered for a moment, and was quenched by a single tear that rose up and took its place. She made no answer.

"I wish you had done so," he cried, bitterly.

"I am sure I wish the same, if it would please you, Mr. Stacey."

Harry remained silent for a time, during which his despair seemed to grow upon him, and to be unbearable.

"Helen," he cried at last, wildly, "you cannot understand what you are doing. You have deceived yourself. You do not know what it is to love, and especially what it is to marry without it. True, I am poor now, but I shall not always be so. I am young yet; at my age this man Bloodstone had no more fortune than I now possess. Believe me, that I shall not remain poor. You will not have long to wait, for my task will be

a task inspired by love, and I shall never rest from it till I have placed you in a position equal to the best in the land. This man is unworthy of you, and all the treasure in the mines of the world, could not render him your equal. Oh, do not sell yourself for this man's gold. If you do, you will bitterly repent it. Only say that you will break off this hateful, this disgraceful engagement, and I will myself give you up, if you wish it. Anything but that. Do not make yourself miserable for life, as I am sure you will do, if you marry this creature's money."

Harry paused for a reply. Helen could not answer; she dared not trust herself with words; yet her sense of dignity told her that it was not just to herself to listen to Harry's depreciation of her intended husband. To anybody else, she would have promptly replied by rising and leaving the room at the first remark made about Enoch Bloodstone. But she could not do it when the speaker was Harry Stacey. She would be content if she could pass through this last interview without revealing to him what a hold he had upon her heart. He could say whatever it should please him to say. His voice even in anger was sweeter to her ears than the softest whisper of any other human being. A blow from Harry Stacey would be more welcome to Helen than a term of endearment from this man to whom, in a short month, she would be united in marriage. Harry in the energy of his passion had risen from his seat and approached Helen as if to catch her answer. But when, after standing a moment, no word came from her lips, he looked in her face more carefully, and its palor seemed to strike him all at once with a new light. He saw a tear; not of anger as he thought at the remark, but rather of suffering. He had wounded her by his brutality. He was at her feet in an instant.

"Oh, forgive me, Miss Graham, I did not know what I was saying; I only thought of my love, of my disappointment, of my miserable, wretched self. I was brutal, I was wicked to speak to you in this manner. Can you forgive me?"

He caught her hand in his to entreat her pardon; she did not withdraw it nor even attempt to do so. There were more tears in her eyes; he covered her hands with kisses and vows of his love; but not a word could she speak. He ceased addressing her as Miss Graham, and again called her Helen. His voice was not angry; it was the tender voice of love, such as he had never before used to her; such as she had never before heard; each word he spoke found a place in her heart; her eyes closed, and her ears drank in the sweet story they had so

long yearned to hear. It was the Harry of her dream, reclining once more at her feet ; and, as he breathed forth with the fervor of a lover and the delicacy of a brother what was in his heart, the black curtain seemed to disappear from her soul, and the fairy land, the floating island seemed once more to come faintly in view. His head was upon her shoulder, — her cheek was against his cheek. His low voice said to her, “Queen of my soul, come away with me and love me ; let us go from this place to a fairer and brighter land, where we shall live for each other and be happy.” For a moment, Helen felt herself rising to follow her lord, for so he was, to obey his command and step upon the fairy island now so near to the shore that its palm groves waved to her a gentle and familiar invitation. She could see the gorgeous flowers and breathe their sweet and intoxicating fragrance. But it was only for a moment, and then the haggard and careworn form of her father seemed to stand before her, and sorrowfully point at another and still more sad face in the distance. It was her darling mother. The young girl opened her eyes and pushed Harry away ; not rudely, for he had not offended, but firmly and resolutely.

“Sit down, Mr. Stacey,” she said.

Harry took the chair to which she pointed.

“I know that you love me, and have never once doubted it since the first moment that you appeared to wish me to know it. I know that you suffer, and am sorry ; deeply sorry for you. I wish it lay in my power to make you happy. There is scarcely anything in the world short of disgrace that I would not freely, gladly do, to give you an hour of happiness. I hope, Mr. Stacey, that you will believe me when I say this. God, who can see what is in our hearts, knows that I speak the truth. But you must remember that there are other disappointments in this world of grief besides the one under which you suffer ; that yours is not the only broken heart among all the millions of God’s creatures. There are others who suffer, and bleed, and die even, in secret, not daring to tell of their wounds, but repining in unknown and unpitied sorrow, that gnaws at their hearts and cannot be disclosed. I believe that you love me ; and I believe that the grandeur of your nature is worthy of the love of myself, — of any woman that lives. If I did not, I should not to-day be answering your questions and making explanations to you of my conduct. I have told you all that I can tell you ; have answered every question that a lady, situated as I am, can answer without forgetting what is due to herself.

Perhaps I have done more. I have promised to become the wife of Mr. Enoch Bloodstone, and intend to fulfil my engagement with him, if I should live that long, in a little more than a month. You seem to think that I have been induced to do this by my desire to share in that gentleman's wealth."

Harry made a movement as if to protest, but Helen, without observing it, continued, —

"I cannot reply to this opinion of yours, nor would I if I could. It is enough that I have promised to marry him, and that it has become now, even if it was not before, my duty to do so. If Mr. Henry Stacey loves me as truly and as loyally as he says he does, and is the noble and generous gentleman that I believe him to be, he will not endeavor to make the lady of his heart forget her duty, but he will respect her motives even without knowing them. He will rise up and go away from her, and leave her to struggle along life's weary path, bearing patiently to the end such burden as God may have laid upon her, without adding as much as another feather to her heavy load."

She ceased speaking and buried her face in her handkerchief for a moment, then wiped her eyes and again sat erect as before. Harry arose from his chair and approached hers.

"Can you say anything more to me, Helen?"

"Not now, Harry," she answered.

"Will you bear a message to your dear mother from me, Helen?"

"Yes, Harry, gladly."

"Say to her that Harry went away full of love for her, and all that is hers. That she has a place in his heart by the side of his own mother, and that when he thinks of her, it is as his other mother. That he will never cease to love her, and those whom she loves, while he lives."

This said, he advanced, and stooping down, took up a ringlet of the lady's hair that hung for the moment in rich profusion upon her shoulder and raised it to his lips.

"Good-by, Helen," he said, and went out at the door.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

## THE WEDDING DAY IS FIXED.

IN the course of the day Helen and Mrs. Graham talked over the contemplated marriage. The mother was hard to reconcile to the step her daughter was about to take. She feared it would not result in her Baby's happiness, she said.

"Are you quite certain, darling," she asked again and again, "that you really love Mr. Bloodstone? Have you studied carefully your own heart, and are you sure you do right to marry this gentleman? There are many fine young men in this country to choose from. Might you not by waiting meet with some one that you would prefer?"

"Dear mother, I know that I am doing just right. There is no one living whom, at this moment, I would marry save Mr. Bloodstone. Not if they were all to come in a grand procession and offer themselves. I would reject them all and take him. So make yourself quite content, mother, and believe me that I know my own heart thoroughly. Now let us talk of the day. When shall it be, for I have promised to give him an answer speedily; and you know, mother, what young lovers are?"

There was a touch of bitterness in Helen's voice that caused her mother to look up, but the smile on her face dispelled the notion, and she answered, —

"You know, dear, that a year's engagement is expected of a young lady at home in Pennsylvania, at the least. You must not marry in haste, for you remember the old proverb."

"But, mamma, that is quite impossible, we are here in Washoe now and not in Pennsylvania. Such a delay is not to be thought of. I know Mr. Bloodstone would not agree to it for a moment. Why, mamma, I might lose my suitor entirely were I to put him upon such a probation. A month is quite as long as he will consent to wait, I am sure. Besides, the engagement is a family secret, and the wedding is to be without display. I have known Mr. Bloodstone a long time; who is to know how long we have been engaged?"

"A month, Helen! I could not think of your marrying any gentleman after only a month's engagement. It would be a disgrace. Why, I could never tell it. I blush at the very thought of such a thing. What has come over you, my child?"

But Helen persisted in her determination to have as little delay as possible, until at last her mother agreed, and the time was set six weeks ahead.

Helen's motive for keeping the engagement secret was a dread of facing the inquiries of her friends. How could she ever explain to Blanche McIver the humiliating, the degrading step she had taken. That she could ever convince her friend that she had married Enoch Bloodstone for love, she felt to be impossible. And it would be a violation of her notions of duty, once married to him, to make any explanation whatever upon the point. She therefore argued to herself, "When I am married no one will presume to question me. They may have their own opinion, but I shall at least be spared the indignity of hearing them. People will think I have sold myself for Bloodstone's money, and if they are very ill-natured they may go beyond, and say that I might have done better, that I might have got more money elsewhere and perhaps a gentleman with it. They may say that I held myself very cheap in the market. But I, at least, of all the world, can only suspect them of it, for they will be careful not to hint such a thing in my presence."

It was not only Blanche McIver and her San Francisco friends, whose criticisms Helen dreaded to undergo, but there were eyes in Virginia, in the very hotel where she lived, that she could not again meet as of yore. Even the voice of the stage-driver, as he rushed into her parlor the next evening to set down a beautiful tea rose, growing and blossoming in a wooden box, that he had fetched from California, drew her heart up into her throat. When he took her hand in his rough paw, and shook it as if it had been the handle of a pump, she felt sure that he was looking quite through her eyes at the dreadful secret that lay only half-hidden in the bundle of woes and griefs at the bottom of her breast. And, for the first time, she was glad when Jack had finished his quarter of an hour's chat about his horses and the events of his trip over the mountains, and had gone away to the dining-room to, as he in his rough way termed it, throw himself outside of a few plates of hash.

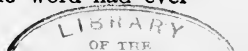
But it was the, to her, quiet and gentle-mannered Greathouse that she the most dreaded to have know of what had been agreed



upon. Not that he had ever presumed to address a word to her upon so delicate a matter as the contingency of her being married to anybody. For he had never done so. But he had so conducted himself that Helen felt almost as if she was directly accountable to him for her conduct. That he had saved her life and the lives of her whole family, she had never forgotten. But he had done more than this. He had seen and conversed with her every day since that time, and always in the same way. He had never met her, save casually in the halls of the hotel or at the table, and had always left her at her own door, declining her invariable invitation to enter. Their conversation had never so much as once wandered away from subjects of common or ordinary public notoriety. Neither herself nor her interests, himself, his hopes, or his wishes, had ever been so much as once hinted at between them. Yet Robert Greathouse and Helen Graham as fully understood each other as though they had spent days and weeks in conversing freely about themselves.

Women possess the power of understanding men's sentiments towards themselves, and generally do understand them long before they take form and are issued in the coin of words. There is a certain system of telegraphy that exists between men and women, with its own code of signals, which the delicate and sensitive woman never mistakes. By this code they had conversed. Through this mysterious line they had communicated their thoughts in this peculiar language. He had said to her, "I love you, and you know that I love you. That passion I do not, cannot expect you to return. You cannot be asked to ally yourself to this colossal failure, to this debris of a misdirected life, this broken fragment of a mischievous system. You must be the queen of a society from which I shall be expelled, driven forth a proscribed outlaw. The golden tints of your hair must flash their yellow rays over a system of domestic joys where I may not so much as set my foot. All this is plain, and Robert Greathouse understands it, consents to it, desires it. But while this is true, he still asks of you that you will remember him, not as others have told you of him, but as you understand him and know him. That you will, when he is gone, retain in your heart one corner of friendly recollection for the man whom they would only know as the gambler and the outlaw, but whom you have known to be something more than that."

All this Helen had understood, though no word had ever



passed between them, and every action of hers in his presence had been a response to this standing declaration; he had felt and understood her reply. She said to him, —

“You are understood. I know the generous spirit that actuates you. I know it in all of its noble unselfishness. You may be to the world whatever the world chooses to call you; you may be Greathouse, the murderer, the gambler, or what you will; but to Helen Graham, who understands how you are so, and why, and what you would have been had circumstances dealt differently with you, you can never be else than Greathouse, the noble, the grand, the brave and generous, self-sacrificing man; entitled to her friendship and gratitude, which debt shall never be withheld.”

And now she felt that she had taken a step which she could not, would not, explain to any human creature, and, which left unexplained, must lose her the respect of this man. But a little time before, she could not have believed that the opinion of Robert Greathouse could have been of such consequence to her as she now found it to be. She prized his good opinion more than she did that of any one else, save the one sole idol of her heart; and this one had already been told all that she could tell to living creature, and had gone away. She said to herself, —

✓ “Greathouse has, in his heart, placed me as beyond his reach; but, in doing that, he has reasoned that I will do nothing degrading, nothing unworthy of the woman he believes me to be. In crushing out his own hopes, he has at least believed that I will never marry a man who is his inferior. What will he think of me when he learns that I am about to become the wife of one who has shown himself to be unworthy to associate with Robert Greathouse, the murderer, in his worst and lowest character? I, at least, owe it to him not to do that. What will he think of me when he hears of it? To him it will be a deliberate sale of myself for Enoch Bloodstone’s wealth. I must keep the secret till all is over, and the sacrifice is complete. Then he will go his way, and I will sink down to the fate that is so surely closing around me.”

But if Helen expected, by her sacrifice, to bring back to the house the happiness and contentment of better days, she was in the main disappointed. It is true, that her father’s conduct was changed toward the family, and, in consequence of this, she had the pleasure of seeing her mother’s state of mind apparently improved.

But the relief was only superficial. The mother could not reconcile herself to what she thought was a mistake of Helen's, in the selection of a husband. Had she been in good health, no doubt after the matter was once decided upon, her own delicacy would have prevented her from reverting to the matter which was constantly upon her mind. But she was an invalid, growing daily more peevish and fretful. Every day she forgot herself, and made some allusion to the mesalliance that her daughter, in her judgment, was about to make. Then, with an apology for her forgetfulness of what was due to the future wife, she would burst into tears and clasp her "beautiful golden-haired Baby," as she called Helen, to her arms.

Helen tried all she could to soothe her mother, and to reconcile her to the event. She invented all sorts of noble actions and splendid achievements, of which she made Bloodstone the hero. She enlarged upon his uniform kindness to her father, and multiplied by ten the amount of money he had spent in the mine. She discovered innumerable cases of persons who had been in like manner assisted in difficulties by this generous and self-sacrificing man. His life had been spent in searching for opportunities to perform noble deeds.

Matilda would hear all without a word of commendation or objection, and when it would be done she would draw her daughter to her heart and hold her against it, as she would have done had some slaughterer of innocents, with sword in hand, been knocking at the door, and demanding her first-born for instant destruction.

But Mr. Graham seemed to have gained a new lease of hopeful spirits. He had been completely imposed upon by his daughter. To him, Bloodstone was a man like any other, and, though he had never admired him greatly, he could see nothing so very extraordinary in a young woman falling in love with him. Had it been a girl that was to have been married to a son of his, he would have been quite capable of observing the natural incongruity of the match. But as it was, while he had hardly expected to see his daughter fall in love with the man upon whom his own fortune so much depended, yet he was not, upon the whole, greatly surprised.

He had had, at one time, more ambitious notions with respect to his daughter's place in life, but now financial embarrassments had quite destroyed all of these illusions, and he was content to see her marry a substantial man, capable of furnishing her with the necessary comforts to which she had been ac-

customed. And when he found that her own inclinations so completely tallied with his necessities, he felt that he had been favored by a piece of almost incredible good fortune. When, yielding to the importunities of Bloodstone, he wrote her the letter which had brought this all about, he had not intended for her to make any very great sacrifice of her feelings. By consenting to receive assistance from Bloodstone, he felt that he was in honor committed by one act and another to say something in favor of his pretensions.

When Bloodstone told him that he could not go on any longer with his outlay, without some encouragement from the object of his hopes, he, Graham, saw nothing to wonder at in that. It was only natural that the man should come to that determination at last; and though his putting that resolution in execution, and abandoning the work, would result in his own immediate and hopeless ruin, still he could not complain. The wonder had been that Bloodstone had not given up the enterprise long before.

It was while pressed by Bloodstone upon this point that he had written the letter; but, had he had any notion that in doing so he would cause his daughter to make any very great sacrifice, he would not have so worded his letter. He had only wished her to treat the man fairly, and to accept or reject him, in accordance with her notions of what was best for her own future happiness.

Had Bloodstone returned to the mine with Helen's positive refusal, Mr. Graham would have yielded to the result, would have abandoned himself to his fate without a word of reproach. He would even have commended her in the midst of his ruin.

But he had not understood his daughter's nature, nor had he placed a proper estimate upon the cold, calculating character of the man in whose hands he was placing so tremendous an engine as the letter proved to be. He was quite capable of making any sacrifice for his daughter's happiness, but he had erred in his estimate of what women are capable of doing for those they love.

Had he made a confidant of his wife, he would never have made the mistake. Her woman's knowledge of woman would have saved them. She knew in a moment what Mr. Graham never could learn, that no woman of Helen's lofty nature, could love or even respect such a man as Enoch Bloodstone. She knew instinctively that it was the mating of the eagle with the

barn-yard fowl, and that nature must protest at the unnatural alliance.

But Mr. Graham, happy at finding that Helen had, of her own choice, selected Bloodstone, simply looked forward to the development of his mine, if fortune favored him, and to the comfortable establishment of his daughter, to her own satisfaction, in any event.

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## CHAPTER XXIV.

### MORE TROUBLE AT THE MINE.

THE time before the wedding-day was spent by Mr. Graham chiefly at the office, examining accounts and watching the disbursements. In fact, Bloodstone had, since the return of his principal to the Territory, so managed matters that he had as little occasion for visiting the mine as possible. And when that gentleman did go down the shaft, the superintendent always adroitly contrived to go with him in person, or to have him accompanied by either the engineer or the head miner, in whom, for reasons well known to the reader, he had full confidence. When he was in this manner conducted into the mine, he was, of course, always taken into the fifth or lower level, and so shown freely about when the work was going on, and then shown out again. If he ever spoke of visiting the fourth level, which was the level being worked when he left the autumn before, good reasons against doing so were always easily found, and then the matter was either postponed or wholly overruled. But as time progressed, Bloodstone did not seem to prosecute the work as zealously as Mr. Graham had expected to see it go on. The gangs of men, instead of being increased, were each day in some manner diminished, until the work had come almost to a stand-still. Mr. Graham was surprised at this. Bloodstone had, all along, intimated to him that he was dilatory in the management, not from want of faith in the mine, but because, as he said, he had engaged in the work to assist Mr. Graham as well as his family, including his daughter, for whom he had an ardent

attachment, and that he had already ventured as much of his wealth in the enterprise as he felt that he could reasonably do, unless he was to receive his reward in the hand of the object of his passion. Mr. Graham had felt the humiliation of his position for a long time. In fact, from the first, he had seen the fatal error that he had committed, but it was now too late to remedy that. He could only go on as he had commenced. But now the matter had taken a wholly different complexion. Mr. Bloodstone had proposed to Helen and had been joyfully accepted. If he really had confidence in the mine as he professed to have, he was no longer spending his money and his time for the benefit of another, but really for himself. With Helen as his wife, Mr. Bloodstone would become to all intents the owner and controller of the property. It would be practically his own. Then why should he not go on and prosecute it to a full and complete development? So reasoned Mr. Graham, and so he pleaded with Bloodstone. All of this the superintendent fully agreed to by word of mouth. But each day saw a reduction of the force at work in the drifts and levels. True, he would always be ready with an excuse of some sort. Sometimes it would be that men could not be obtained. The wages of laborers had been advanced, and he would not submit to the intended extortion. At last, as the wedding-day drew near, it was that approaching event that took up all of his attention and absorbed his thoughts. He could not employ his mind upon administrative affairs, when so much happiness was coming hourly nearer and nearer to him. Mr. Graham could scarcely find open fault with this gallant whim of the happy bridegroom, so he sat in bitter disappointment and saw the precious moments slip away, in what he thought to be disastrous idleness.

One morning, about a fortnight before the wedding-day, the now almost discouraged owner of the mine rose from his bed at an early hour and proceeded to the pit's mouth to see how the work was going on. He reached there after the hour when the men should have been, according to the rules, all at their places at the bottom of the fifth level. To his amazement, he found them standing about the hoisting shed, in clusters, idly talking.

"What does this mean?" he inquired of the first man he met.

"Have you not heard?" was the reply. "Mr. Bloodstone has gone to tell you about it. We are in a bad scrape. The mine is flooded and we cannot work."

Mr. Graham felt almost as if he had heard his death-sentence

when these terrible words fell upon his ears. During all the time he had been operating the mine, from the first breaking ground, with all his plagues and all his troubles, this one of water had never come upon him before. He turned so pale that one of the men brought him a stool from the engine-room to sit down upon.

"When did it break in?" he asked. "Where does it come from? We have never had any trouble from water. How and where did you strike it?"

Nobody knew. It was an inexplicable mystery to all. Of late, in the sluggish way of working the mine, the night gangs had been taken off and work had been carried on only during the day. On the evening before, the miners said, they had quitted work at the usual hour leaving all well and in good condition. "The mine was as dry as a bone," were the words of the man who told him. But when they returned in the morning and attempted to descend, the cage had plunged into water in the fifth level, and some of the men were nearly drowned before it could be drawn up.

"A perfect lake must have broken in," said the man, "to have filled it up so quickly. It is really wonderful."

"Would you like to go down and examine it?" asked the engine-driver. "I will let you down as far as you can go."

But Mr. Graham was utterly discouraged, and could scarcely rise from his seat. He had not the heart to look this new disaster in the face. Fortune had been making a football of him so long that he had become almost a coward. At last, he managed to get up and stagger back to his rooms at the hotel. There he found Bloodstone sitting on the sofa conversing with Matilda about the wedding in apparently fine spirits.

"What is the matter, Edmond?" said Matilda, on seeing him enter with his blanched face. "What has happened?"

Mr. Graham could not speak, but Bloodstone answered, —

"Oh!" he said, "I forgot to tell you that we have had a wetting down this morning. A little moisture in the mine," he continued, seeing all turn towards him as if for explanation.

"The mine is flooded," said Mr. Graham, in answer to Matilda's anxious looks.

The wife did not comprehend the extent of such a disaster, but she knew well from the countenance of her husband that it must be serious.

"It is nothing," said Bloodstone, with a laugh. "Indeed it

is not. I will have every drop of water out of that as soon as we get back from our wedding tour."

This last was levelled at Helen, who, hearing her father's voice, entered the room.

Again the father tried to explain to his wife and daughter that a flooded mine involved long delays and great additional expense. That new machinery would have to be made at San Francisco, expressly to clear the mine, and brought over, and put up, and set at work, before any more explorations could be made. That this was a great disaster even to a successful mine with a known vein of ore, and that to a doubtful mine it was only another name for absolute ruin.

But Bloodstone would not listen to such a statement of the case. It was absolutely nothing; the water had already ceased rising, and only the lower level was flooded. The mine could soon be cleared, and the work resumed; that he would proceed that very day to make arrangements for pumps, which would soon be ready, and that in the meantime he would cut off all useless expense, by discharging the hands, — all excepting the chief men, such as the engineer, the head-miner, or foreman, the assayer, and two or three men to watch the place. "We will have things put to rights," he said, "as soon as our honeymoon is over; won't we, Helen?"

The young lady controlled herself as well as she could, and answered that she had no doubt that all would soon be well again.

Mr. Bloodstone arose, and said he would go to the office and write to the agent at San Francisco about the pumps, and have them ready to be sent to the Territory.

Mr. Graham threw himself upon the sofa in the deepest despair! Nothing like this, he said, had ever come upon him. He could not see his way through it. True, Bloodstone said that he would stand by him, and go on with the work as soon as the wedding was over; but this did not make him feel any the less anxious. If they had ever found any silver-ore in the mine, he should feel quite different. But here they were already down to the water in great and unknown quantities, and as yet not even the appearance of ore. Bloodstone might think he would go on; but when he should come back from the wedding-tour, he might feel altogether differently.

The ladies tried to comfort him. Helen threw her arms about him, and kissed him and cried over him; Matilda recounted to him all of the stories of Bloodstone's generous



deeds, that had been invented by her Baby, to allay the invalid mother's fears. She had no doubt that he would do precisely as he had promised to do. He was one of the noblest of men. His chief object in life, — so she had heard, and how she had heard, she did not mention, — had been to search for, and find out gentlemen in difficulties, and to relieve them; to advance them money, and to encourage them in their struggles; that he gloried in such work; that if he should discover the vein for Mr. Graham, he would at once withdraw all claim to it, and go away; wandering up and down, without rest, till he should find somebody else similarly situated, so that he could benefit them. Then again, he was to be their son, — he was to be their precious Baby's husband, and that alone would be such a tie, that he would stand by them through good and evil report. All of this was Helen obliged to hear, and without a word of protest. It was only the repetition of her own words, — so fabulous. Oh, she alone knew how fabulous!

In the afternoon, the extent, though not the cause, of the disaster was learned. The water had burst in, it was thought, from the fourth level, the one now abandoned, having been found to contain no ore. It had all come in during the night; and now the supply was supposed to be exhausted, or at least it rose no higher than to flood the lower or fifth level, where the work was being carried on, and to extend part of the way up the main shaft towards the fourth level. The matter was not serious in point of expense, but involved some delay, while the necessary pumps were being brought up from San Francisco. But a new difficulty had been met with. Noxious gases, so it was said, had made their appearance in the drifts and chambers of the fourth level, probably having come in from some interior cavern, perhaps in the centre of the mountain, with the water that had poured down the shaft into the lower level; before work could be resumed, this would have to be removed or neutralized. This, however, when the time would come would be but a comparatively trifling affair. But as nothing would be gained by working at the impure air, till the water was out, and as the water must await the arrival of the pumps, Mr. Bloodstone, on consultation with the engineer, the assayer, and the chief-miner, had determined to close up the mine for the present.

"So we shall have a regular wedding-holiday," he cried, soon after coming into Mrs. Graham's parlor. "And after the honeymoon is happily spent, we will come back here, Helen, and set to work for one or two months, and pull the old folks through

their troubles, and set them on their legs again. That done, we will leave the mountains for fairer realms. Eh, Helen? what do you say? Does that suit you?"

Helen said she was satisfied with whatever was agreeable to her father and mother; and so that matter was by Bloodstone soon disposed of.



## CHAPTER XXV.

### HOW MINES ARE MANAGED IN WASHOE.

THE best digested plans of the wisest of men do not always prove successful. Miscarriages and disappointments will, at times, come upon us, that human foresight seems absolutely incapable of guarding against. These facts had been forcibly exemplified to Mr. Marvin Withergreen, president of the Pactolus Silver-Mining Company, and to his associate in a certain fraudulent scheme, Mr. Enoch Bloodstone. These gentlemen had been engaged during the entire winter in an unsuccessful effort to put in execution their plans with respect to the splendid deposit of silver-ore, known by them to exist in the Graham mine.

The reader will remember that, when in that mine, on a certain Sunday, they had agreed upon a scheme by which the ore was to be taken out through the shaft of the Pactolus mine. But to do this for their individual profit, they must first possess themselves of all, or nearly all, of the shares of that mine. Now, Mr. Withergreen was too old a stock-jobber and manipulator of shares to ever be, under any ordinary circumstances, the owner of any considerable amount of them, except just before an election. Of course, at such a time he would buy them in quantities sufficient to vote himself into the control of the mine for the ensuing year. That once accomplished, shares were to him not only useless, they were worse. They were a positive detriment. For while he owned the shares, the profits of the mine, if any were earned, justly belonged to himself. To appropriate these profits in such cases to his own benefit, was but

to take his own. That is a financial operation, reasoned Mr. Withergreen, of which the most ordinary mind is capable. It is, perhaps, the first idea that dawns upon the understanding of the man of business just embarking in his career. It is primitive in character and exceedingly simple in detail. It requires for its accomplishment neither learning nor genius. It is well enough for beginners.

But Mr. Marvin Withergreen had got far beyond all such simple and natural operations as that. He looked upon them with absolute contempt. It was, in his judgment, no better than the case of a man stealing money out of one of his pockets and hiding it in the other; anybody could do it. There was another difficulty connected with the ownership of shares. They were subject to calls for certain fixed sums assessed by the presidents and boards of directors against them, for the purpose of carrying on the work. "Irish dividends," these were called, in the cant language of the stock market. When these calls were likely to be made, a president or director of foresight, would not think of owning shares. His would always have gone into the market, and have sold before the publication of an assessment. No sensible man would think of assessing his own stock. Besides, the money collected on the calls came directly into the hands of the president for disbursement, and were, to him, a more certain source of profit than the varying and spasmodic results of digging and reducing ore. Unless the deposit of silver was quite rich it was always better to have none at all. A mine with absolutely no ore, and no pretence of ore, was always more profitable than one that paid only a trifle beyond the working expenses. Such a mine gave no margin for ingenuity, as stealing was called. A discovery of silver in paying quantities, greatly complicated the processes by which the gains of the management were obtained. It was no longer the simple formula of levying and collecting assessments, and fabricating false vouchers and fictitious annual or quarterly balances. But arrangements had to be made with mill-owners, for crushing the ore; and, in order to induce these men to sign and swear to fabricated statements of the yield, a considerable portion of the precious metals had to be spread upon them, in the way of a healing balm to their tender sensibilities. In short, the inconveniences of having a paying mine to manage, were almost endless. While, on the other hand, the management of a mine that was simply being explored, in search of metals, was a pleasant position, where nearly all was

profit, and but few questions were asked. Directly after an election to the presidency or directorship of any of the mines in the fingers of Mr. Marvin Withergreen, his plan had always been invariably to first pretend that great discoveries had been made, followed by a dividend, then to borrow money from the bank to pay the dividend with; this would, generally, put the stock up to a good price, whereupon, his shares would all go upon the market, and be sold. Then would come an assessment, to raise money to pay the bank for the borrowed money, followed by more assessments or false dividends, throughout the year, as his interests might seem to require, till the period of another election approached. Now, for the first time in a year, he would be obliged to own a large number of the companies' shares. That is to say, a majority of one share over one half the amount of the capital stock. This must be purchased to the best advantage. The first move would now be to issue an annual statement of the condition of the mine, artfully drawn with a view to depress the value of the shares. It would either openly proclaim that the vein had been lost for the time, or it would announce that a large call for money must be at once made for some expenses necessary for the further prosecution of the process of development. This, of course, would be followed by the assessment, published with a grand flourish in all the newspapers. Then the shares held by the president or his friends would be thrown upon the market, and sold at some very low price. The market was now prepared for Mr. Withergreen to secure his re-election for another year; a year to be followed by management precisely similar to the one preceding.

The reader will remember that Mr. Withergreen had promised Bloodstone, in the chamber of the Graham mine, to clap on an assessment, and knock the stock down, so that they could have it all in a short time, and at their own price. The reason for this course was obvious to them both. The excavation in the fourth level had disclosed a mass of ore of almost unparalleled richness and breadth. Similar bodies, known as "chimneys" had been discovered in one or two other places, on the Comstock lode, and they had yielded such enormous sums, that all connected with them had gained princely fortunes in a few month's time. Mr. Withergreen had convinced himself, in half an hour after entering the chamber where he found Enoch Bloodstone, that his whole system of the management of mines must be changed, with respect to this one. No such

vast quantities of silver ore as it evidently contained could be hoisted up through his shaft, and by any possibility afterwards concealed. Some of it, a great deal of it, must go into the pockets of the shareholders of the Pactolus, through whose shaft it must come to the surface, and whose workmen must dig it out, no matter what precaution he might take to prevent such a result. The capabilities of a mining management for absorbing, misapplying, swallowing up, stealing the proceeds of the mine, were vast, almost boundless. Hitherto, they had been deemed to be sufficient for any emergency that could ever arise. But as Mr. Withergreen sat in the chamber, and gazed at the glistening mass of ore, blue with chloride, and spangled and bristling with "horn silver," his vast genius was dazed, and confessed itself, at last, met and vanquished.

"Bloodstone," he said, "here is a mine that must be honestly managed. Absolutely, it will pay to own the stock, and take care of it." Nothing like it had ever come to him before, and it will not be a matter of wonder, when we say that he did not know precisely how to act. He knew what ought to be done; but the difficulty lay in carrying out quickly and securely, the necessary plans. He must own the stock; but the process of obtaining it was necessarily slow and difficult; he must repeat a well-known trick in California and Washoe, called "freezing out shareholders." He had frozen out thousands of them in his time, and believed he knew how to go about it. His judgment, formed upon a long experience, told him that he must own every share of the capital stock of the Pactolus mine, before he could dare to commence his scheme of stealing Mr. Graham's ore, and hoisting it out of the shaft of his company. His refrigerator must be put into immediate operation to freeze out the Pactolus shareholders, lest they participate in the spoils of the robbery of the rival mine. Each share that would escape him, he felt, would be so much money lost out of his own pocket; but, how to do it? That had been, all of these months, the perplexing difficulty. His course had, at first, appeared plain enough. He took the old beaten path, always followed when freezing out is to be accomplished.

Within a week after the interview between Bloodstone and the president of the Pactolus Silver-Mining Company in the Graham Mine, the columns of the daily Virginia City Quartz Crusher, as well as the other journals, both in that town and at Carson City, the capital of the Territory, were filled with leading articles, all showing conclusively that there was but one vein

of ore in Mount Davidson, and that all mines not located upon a direct central line therein described must prove absolutely worthless. The next day followed more editorial comments, this time pointing out the mines by name that could never by any possibility prove profitable. Amongst them the Pactolus was pointed out as a notable example. It was certain that this mine would very soon be abandoned, and very properly so. That all money expended in its development must be totally lost. Two days after, letters from Washoe correspondents began to appear in the San Francisco journals. "Knowing One" wrote to the Daily Smasher that the Pactolus was to be abandoned as worthless. "Smarty, from Mud Springs," the correspondent of the Evening Vindicator of Constitutional Liberty and Mining Gazette, had found out positively that it was all up with the Pactolus, and that nothing more was to be done except to call in a large assessment to pay off outstanding debts, and then it would be closed up. "Borax" wrote editorially to the Sunday Morning Snort of Defiance and Sporting Press, that he had seen the list of calls, and that the assessment had been fixed purposely at an immensely large sum. That this had been done by the management in order to clear away all liabilities, so that no suits could hereafter be brought to harass or annoy shareholders in their individual capacity after the disincorporation and dissolution of the company. That this step had not been finally agreed upon until the first geologist and scientific man of the age, Professor Vitriol, had at a considerable expense made a thorough and careful examination of the mine, and had ascertained, beyond the chance of a doubt, that there was no argentiferous or other valuable metallic deposit within a radius extending five hundred feet beyond the utmost outside bounds of the company's ground. Then came the list of calls in all of the papers, occupying each two whole columns usually devoted to editorial and leading matter. Twenty dollars a share had been assessed, four times as much as had ever been raised at one call before.

This done, Mr. Withergreen considered the ground cleared for operations in the stock board. He telegraphed in cipher to Mr. Vanderbilt Gudgeon, his broker, at San Francisco, to sell for him one hundred shares of Pactolus stock, at prices not beyond five dollars each, and to run the price down to two dollars a share by his sales. This done he was to inform his principal by telegraph of the result. The price of Pactolus in the

Board, up to this moment, had been twenty dollars a share. In an hour he received a reply to his telegram.

San Francisco Stock and Exchange Board, 11:54 A. M. Marvin Withergreen, Esq.—Sold for your account hundred shares Pactolus, cash, at average three dollars. Great excitement in Board. Shares advanced in ten minutes to one hundred and sixty dollars. Still rising. I await instructions. V. Gudgeon."

Withergreen was astounded at the receipt of this dispatch. He knew positively that there was no silver or precious ore of any sort in the Pactolus ground. He had long, in fact had always, suspected such to be the case, but now that he had seen the rich "chimney" in the Graham Mine he knew that the vein did not go through the claim, nor indeed any nearer to it than several hundred feet. But in spite of all of this, here was the stock rising, in face of a call for contributions on the shares equal to the full market value of the stock at the time it was imposed.

Mr. Marvin Withergreen could not at first understand this; it was to him a new phase in the features of mines.

But the reader will no doubt have already suspected the cause of the unexpected rise. The same thing has occurred many times since in the history of Washoe mines, and is now well understood and calculated upon. It was then new. The President of the Pactolus had played his "freezing out" game once too often. Mr. Marvin Withergreen had become thoroughly known to the share operating public as a man wholly unscrupulous, and who would shrink at nothing. This fact had not been taken into account by him in laying his plans. Like the ostrich that hides its head in the sand when pursued, he had thought himself in concealment when in fact he was becoming rapidly known in his true character. People had watched the too obvious effort to herald the disastrous condition of the Pactolus, and suspected that it was not without cause. "It is a 'bearing' operation," whispered the knowing ones. The truth was, that in the anxiety of Withergreen it had been altogether overdone. "He has struck it, the sly fox," said the "San Francisco sharps." "He has found the Comstock vein that old Graham has been so long hunting for," said the stock gamblers in confidence to each other. And so they all gave secret orders to buy Pactolus at any price. "I always thought Pactolus was good," they all said, and up went the stock.

Withergreen's hundred shares had been all swallowed up like

a handful of bread crumbs thrown to a tank of hungry carp. He was now, as he expressed it to Bloodstone, "in a nice mess." All the stock he had kept over from last year's elections as a nest-egg had been thrown away, and he was now without any actual interest in the mine.

To make matters worse, at the afternoon sale in the Board, shares still went higher. The next day a telegram from Gudgeon announded the price to be one thousand dollars a share, and none for sale at that. The petard had been fired too soon, and the engineer was already flying high in the air. There was no use trying to buy shares. Where was he to get the money to buy up a controlling interest in the mine at these prices? While any attempt on his part to do so now would only aggravate the evil. Mr. Withergreen had been long enough interested in Washoe mines to know that to have one share less than a majority of the stock in a paying mine, that is a mine really worked for dividends, is just so much worse than having no stock at all, as is represented by the difference that has been paid to get the number of shares on hand, added to the additional liability incurred by the ownership for the company's debts. It was obvious that the steps taken so far to put down the shares had failed hopelessly. But Mr. Marvin Withergreen was a man full of expedients, and he was by no means exhausted. The election would not take place till the following October. Till that time he held the mine in his control as effectually as a cat holds a mouse. He waited a few days to see if the San Francisco shareholders would not begin to grow anxious and relax their notions. But no; Gudgeon telegraphed daily advances, and now the shares were firm at twelve hundred dollars the share. At this price a sufficient number to control the mine would cost a sum far up in the millions.

That night Mr. Marvin Withergreen walked into the mine alone, with a lantern, a hammer, and a steel chisel; an axe and a crowbar were ready to his hand at the bottom.

The next morning telegrams, both public and private, announced in the stock board at San Francisco that the Pactolus was flooded with fifty feet of water in the lower level.

The announcement was made by Mr. Vanderbilt Gudgeon, and he remained standing for a moment to watch the effect of the news. But, before he could survey over half the room, the shrill voice of Jack McKinty was heard to call out fifteen hundred dollars a share for any part of one thousand shares. But no answer. Gudgeon had none to sell, and no one else seemed



inclined to part with what they had. Sixteen hundred, seventeen hundred, eighteen hundred dollars a share for any part of a thousand shares, was called in quick succession ; and at one o'clock Mr. Vanderbilt Gudgeon telegraphed to his principal that Pactolus was quick at twenty-two hundred dollars a share, and that he still awaited further instructions before purchasing for that gentlemen's account.

Great was the fun and sharp the sarcasm levelled at Mr. Marvin Withergreen, by the San Francisco stock brokers, for his clumsy attempts to pull the wool over their eyes. Telegrams were sent over to him by dozens, generally not prepaid, signed by "Jakey Buyer thirty," or "Billy 'Corner,'" or equally facetious names, with mock advice as to what steps to take next in "bearing" the stock.

"Don't have an earthquake in the mine !" cries one. "If you do, the stock will go to four thousand dollars."

"Watch your fires closely," is the solemn advice of another. "If your hoisting shed burns down, the shorts will all be ruined."

"I have sold a thousand shares, 'seller thirty,'" groans a third unpaid dispatch. "For suffering humanity's sake, rob the mail and declare a slapping dividend with the 'swag,' so that I can fill and get out."

The conspirators were stupefied. They saw their mistake, but too late to avoid the consequence. There was no help for it now ; they must wait, and play a policy of masterly inactivity.

At a later period in Washoe mines, Mr. Marvin Withergreen would have commenced his "freezing out" process, not by an assessment and lamentation of despair, but by a handsome dividend, and a startling report of fresh discoveries.

Now, nothing knocks down a stock so rapidly as an unexpected dividend, or the favorable termination, or compromise and settlement of a long and expensive lawsuit, involving the title to the mine. The reason of this is, that, even if the mine has been managed reasonably honest, according to the very loose and vague code of mining corporation morals, still this dividend or this compromise will prove to have been the event, upon the happening of which, most of the stock-holders had long intended to "unload," as they call it. That is, to sell off the shares, and get rid of the whole business, of which, generally, they are heartily disgusted. So hundreds of shares are at once thrown upon the market, and the anomaly is seen of a

stock tumbling down in the face of unexpectedly favorable reports.

✓ Again, the universal want of confidence in the managers, justified, we fear, by too many facts in past history, causes stock-holders to doubt the good faith of almost every announcement, whether it comes in the shape of good or bad news. This will be always the case so long as joint stock companies, — and this applies as well to all other enterprises as to mining operations, — are managed in the interest of stock-jobbers, instead of being worked for the legitimate business for which they were created.

From the time of the flooding of the Pactolus mine in the winter, the conspirators, Withergreen, Bloodstone, and their three or four associates, had had daily meetings for consultation; but, as yet, no further progress had been made towards securing the great prize that lay at their very finger-ends. There was the body of precious metals, but how to get it out, for their own benefit, remained still an unsolved problem.

Bloodstone was especially embarrassed by the fact that he was obliged, all of this time, to continue working gangs of men in the fifth level of the Graham mine, upon work which could not, by any possibility, advance his interests, and was so much money, each day, thrown away, as a dead loss.

✓ But all of this he bore up with very stoutly, until the day that he obtained of Helen Graham the promise of marriage. But this once agreed upon, his interests were wholly changed. Once married to her, every ounce of silver taken out of the mine and turned over to the president of the Pactolus, and the other conspirators, was so much money taken from his own estate, and given away. His plans were at once modified to suit the new order of things.

✓ He would conceal his intended marriage, and the moment it was completed, he would disclose the whole conspiracy to Mr. Graham, excusing his conduct as well as he could by his love for Helen, and the fear he had entertained of losing her, and so break up all the schemes of Withergreen. It was for this reason that he so readily fell into the agreement to keep the engagement a family secret; for, otherwise, his vanity, which was the chief cause of his pursuing the young lady, would have been more gratified by noising the event to the world.

He assured Withergreen, who had some misgivings upon this point, that he had proposed, and had been rejected by her.

He was now full of bitterness, so he declared, and only wanted to be revenged upon the lady for the slight she had put upon him. He had been led on by the Grahams to expend a large sum in developing the mine, upon the promise of the father that he should have the daughter in marriage, and now he had been both cheated and jilted. This was the more readily believed by Withergreen, because he had seen something of Helen Graham, and thought he understood her character. He had never believed that such a girl could be induced, by any possible consideration, to throw herself away upon such a man as Enoch Bloodstone.

He, therefore, saw nothing in the pretended fury of that gentleman, except the natural indignation of a disappointed man, who had met with precisely the rebuff which he had foreseen from the first would occur to him.

Bloodstone saw full well that several months of delay must occur before the Pactolus stock could be reduced to reasonable prices and bought up by Withergreen, although that gentleman had actually been buying it, in his desperation, at prices that would have been thought absurd when he first commenced his "bearing" operations.

"Long before Withergreen can secure enough of the Pactolus shares to justify him in commencing work on the rich 'chimney' in Mr. Graham's mine," reasoned Bloodstone, to himself, "Helen will be my wife, and then I will assert my rights, and defy the whole gang of scoundrels who now have me in their power."

But he satisfied Withergreen by making plausible complaints of his slow movements and evinced an anxiety to see matters make greater progress.

"I cannot much longer keep these unnecessary gangs at work on the fifth level," he said to the president of the Pactolus; "they are eating me out of house and home."

"Why do you keep them at work?" answered the other, bluntly. "You are a great fool for your pains. I would stop them soon enough, if I were you."

"How?" inquired Bloodstone. "To do it, I must find some excuse to satisfy old Graham."

"Have you no water in your mine? Do as I did to knock down Pactolus. Cut your pipes and plug up your drains. That is the best way. You can always pump it out again when you want to resume work. Only fill the fifth level; our ore is above that. It will not be in our way when we get to work."

This conversation took place a few days before the events narrated in the last chapter. The reader has seen how carefully the plan was carried out and how the mine was closed. Mr. Bloodstone now had his plans all perfected by which he was to get the better of all the parties with whom he was engaged, and he possessed the advantage, at least, that he knew everybody's plans and everybody's intentions, which surely was no trifle.

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## CHAPTER XXVI.

### CHARLEY HUNTER OBTAINS EMPLOYMENT.

A WEEK was still to elapse before the day appointed for the wedding—a week full of struggles and conflicting hopes of efforts to do and to undo. Mr. Marvin Withergreen, through his broker, Mr. Vanderbilt Gudgeon, was straining his efforts towards “bearing” Pactolus and buying up its stock. This affair made haste too slowly too keep pace with Mr. Withergreen's rushing desires. Mr. Edmond Graham was occupied in corresponding with his agent, or rather Mr. Bloodstone's agent, for so in reality it was, about steam-pumps which were to be made as speedily as possible and forwarded over the mountain to free his mine from water. Mr. Bloodstone was waiting, impatiently, his wedding-day—the day which was to add to his fortunes the possession of the most beautiful woman in the country and whose conquest was to crown his career with the final stamp of perfect success in the eyes of many who had long looked upon it with sneering and contemptuous doubt and unbelief. The same day was also to put him in possession, practically, of a fortune of untold extent, in the substantial ownership of the Graham mine freed from the schemes of Withergreen and his fellow-conspirators. Matilda Graham was waiting in dread and horror for the expected tap of this slaughterer of innocents at the door of her nursery, demanding her first-born at her hands. Helen Graham alone of them all was waiting for nothing. Her fate had already come.

The day she had had her future seized and wrested from her by Enoch Bloodstone, and had told her father that she consented to the sacrifice, was, she felt, her last day of joyous girlhood in this life. She was no longer the loving, the timid, the doubting maiden that her age, and sex, and gentle organization and training had made her, looking forward with wondering expectation, with hopeful curiosity to the good or evil that might betide her in the future. She was one who had been, five dreary weeks before, cast away, and all the time had been drifting about without rudder or compass upon the dark and bitter waters of despair. She had nothing to wait for ; one day to her was like another, for all were equally dreary and desolate. She kept her room now, constantly, not even going to the dining-room for her meals, though the absention would have resulted to most people, in something very like starvation, so difficult was it to be served in private. But Helen had no appetite, and wanted but a small quantity of food to keep together what little of life was left to her. She knew, instinctively, that Greathouse was each day walking up and down the hall, hoping to speak to her, — to even look at her. She could hear his weary tramp as he passed before her door, on pretence of going here or there, the hollowness of which subterfuge was known best to her. But she stirred not from her door. He might have opened and come in, had he chosen to do so, but she knew better than any one else that he would never do that. She did not want to see him. She did not dare to meet his eye. So she let him march up and down in his dreary march, till, at last, he would wander away into the town in search of relief from the exhaustion produced by constant disappointment. One day, after he had thus taken his departure from the passage-way, she ventured out for some purpose, and, to her surprise, met him. He had again started away, and, upon second thoughts, had returned with the desperate resolution of renewing his watch for her.

“Good-morning, Miss Graham !” he said, abruptly.

She returned his salute as well as she could.

“I hope you are well, Colonel Greathouse.”

“Yes, thank you !” he answered, but without further noticing her inquiry, he continued, “I have been anxious to see you, Miss Graham, to say good-by. I am going away for a few weeks.”

“Going away ?” she asked. “Whither ?”

“I am going out on an expedition against the Indians. They

have been committing so many depredations of late, down on the Truckee and over towards the Humboldt, that, unless punished, the settlers will be either all killed or driven away. A company of rangers is now being organized to go against them, and I have volunteered to be one of the expedition."

"I am sorry that you are going away, Colonel Greathouse." She said this before she thought. Then she blushed to the eyes at the thought of her indiscretion. She had, somehow, looked upon the presence of Greathouse as a sort of protection to them all in the last resort. Protection against what, she did not know, but still a brave heart and strong arm to be always at her service.

"I will not go," he said, gravely, "if you wish me to remain here."

"Oh, no!" she said, blushing deeper than ever, "I would not think of interfering with your plans."

"I have no plans, miss, that are of any consequence to me. I only go because I have nothing to keep me here. It will be a change from the monotony of town life, to which I have never been much accustomed. I will gladly stay, Miss Graham, if I can be of any service to you."

This he said in a low voice, and with a tone of earnestness that caused Helen for a moment to think that he had already fathomed her heart, and knew that she was in deep trouble.

"I know your kind feeling towards me, Colonel Greathouse; I have seen it from the first. If I were really in need of a friend, I would turn to no one quicker than to you; but I need nothing now."

"Are you sure that you tell me all, Miss Graham?" he asked, looking at her with a searching look.

"Yes," she said, but evading his eye. "I need nothing that I cannot have, I assure you, Colonel Greathouse."

"Then good-by, Miss Graham," said he, extending his hand. "But remember what you have just said, for I shall not forget it; that if you need a friend, you will look to me as soon as to another."

She took his hand in hers. "I will not forget it, Colonel Greathouse," she said in a low voice; "good-by, sir, and Heaven bring you safely home again."

She returned to her room feeling a greater sense of loneliness than she had felt since she had been living in the Territory. She sat down by the window and looked out. When she had been there half an hour, she saw Charley Hunter. He was

Charley was a bright, intelligent lad fifteen years old. He had been introduced to Helen by Greathouse when she first arrived in the territory. The boy was a telegraph operator, but had been for some time out of a situation.

His open and manly bearing had long placed him upon excellent terms with Helen, as he was with all who knew him. The reader will recollect that he had been a frequent visitor at No. 16. Greathouse had interested himself in the lad, and had tried to find him employment, but had not succeeded. In a moment Charley had mounted the stairs, and entered the room with sparkling eyes and a smile upon his face.

"You seem happy, Charley," said Helen, extending him her hand. "I hope it is for a good cause." "It is," he cried. "I have obtained employment at last, though not in a telegraph office. I had determined on going out with the Indian expedition that leaves to-day. I had it all arranged with the Governor of the Territory; I was to be a messenger, and was to ride a horse. Colonel Greathouse had partially agreed that I might go, though he was against it at first; but he this moment met me in the street and asked me to stay here, and not to go with the expedition."

"Indeed," answered Helen; "I think that very wise in Colonel Greathouse; you are too young to go to the wars."

"But it is not that, miss; he does not object because of my age. No! I am old enough to go. Now what do you suppose, Helen, he wants me to wait here for?"

"I can't imagine, Charley, unless it is what I have just named."

"No, it is not that; I am to stay here to take care of you, and to amuse you."

"To take care of me, Charley. What put that idea into his head?"

"I do not know; he says that you are lonely here at best, and don't know anybody, and that if I go away you will be very much more dejected and cast down than ever. So he says I am to stay here with you. He has employed me regularly for that purpose. I am to have my board and lodging here in the house, and he pays me the same wages that I had in the telegraph office; only if I get another situation, I am to take it; and then my employment with him stops. So you see I shall earn money to send home to my mother, and not have very hard work at that. Employed to be companion to a beautiful young lady! is it not nice?"

Helen thought she saw in this a means adopted by Greathouse, to prevent the boy to whom he was greatly attached from

going on a dangerous and laborious campaign to which his tender years unsuited him, and at the same time helping him to a little money to send to his widowed mother. So she made no more objections to the odd employment of a companion to herself. It is a means of doing a good action that I ought not to object to, she thought. The boy continued, —

“He told me that I was not to tell anybody, except you, of my new engagement; so you must not let out my secret.”

Helen laughed, and promised silence.

“Are you to do nothing but attend upon me, Charley? for you know you cannot be with me all the time.”

“I am not to be in your way; I am only to come to see you when invited. But I have nothing else to do, unless you should fall into great trouble. Into very great trouble, for that was what he said.”

“Indeed,” she said, turning curiously to the boy; “and what are you to do, Charley, if I fall into great trouble, — into very great trouble?”

“I will tell you, Helen. Colonel Greathouse said to me, — ‘Charley, if Miss Graham meets with great trouble, with very great trouble,’ — remember, for these were his exact words, — ‘she will perhaps tell you of it. When she does so, then you are, without waiting a single moment, to mount my horse that you will find at the stable, and come to me with the word, as quickly as you can come.’ That is all that I have to do, and I think the employment a very pleasant one, especially as it will enable me to send money to my mother every month. Do you not think so, Helen?”

“Yes, Charley; I hope you will find it agreeable. But you must use your best endeavors to find other employment as soon as possible.”

“But I am not to go out to seek for it till Colonel Greathouse sends me word to do so. That he told me; but am to stay near to you, to take care of you.”

“Well, no doubt he will soon send you word to find work; perhaps when he thinks you have had sufficient rest from your last employment.”

“Perhaps so,” answered Charley, and withdrew.



## CHAPTER XXVII.

## THE MOTHER AND HER OFFSPRING.

HAD Mr. Graham been a man of a suspicious turn of mind the strange intimacy that of late had grown up between his superintendent and the president of a mining company known to be in search of that silver vein which nothing short of a freak of nature could have thrown without his own mine, would have occasioned at least some uneasiness. ✓

But he was not in the least so. In fact he had become quite accustomed to the company of Marvin Withergreen about the hoisting works. And, until the accident to the mine which had rendered it unsafe to enter, he saw him every day go into or come out of the shaft in company with Bloodstone, as it was his habit to do, without so much as asking a question. ✓ In fact he looked upon the anxiety which that gentleman felt in his operations as altogether a natural and reasonable one. Their interests were not in the least conflicting. True, they were both in search of the same lode, but each was doing so within his own ground, and the finding of the vein by one would quite put an end to the excavations and expenditure, as well as of the hopes of the other. It may have sometimes occurred to Mr. Graham that if his superintendent, as well as his head miner and engineer, would spend more time at the works instead of sitting about the offices of the Pactolus company, or lounging in its hoisting sheds gossiping with Mr. Withergreen, as they had done lately, that his men would perhaps work more diligently, and that more progress would be made. But when he thought of this, he was restrained from speaking of it by his relationship to Bloodstone. That gentleman was paying all of the bills, mainly upon the prospect of reimbursement from the mine when the ore should be discovered, and it was really more his affair than it was that of Mr. Graham. So that gentleman allowed things to take their own course. "At least," he thought, "when the wedding is over, Bloodstone has promised to act more energetically, and certainly he will redeem his pledge.

The mine will be quite as much his property as mine, for anything which belongs to me also belongs to my only child, and consequently to her husband."

The condition of his wife now began to give Mr. Graham very great uneasiness. As the wedding of her daughter drew daily nearer, she appeared to grow less herself each day. He knew that, had she been well, she would have yielded immediately to her daughter's wishes with respect to the marriage. But, in her present state of bodily and mental health, instead of becoming more reconciled to it as the day approached, she became more and more averse to the wedding, until now they feared to mention it in her presence, the shock to her system was so obviously cruel. Yet she had never in her waking moments raised a whisper against it. She had always said, "Yes, my precious baby loves him," for she no longer seems willing to pronounce his name, and no doubt will be unhappy if she does not marry the object of her choice. The heart and hand should always go together; and then she would draw her child to her breast and cover her frantically with her arms, as if she saw the slaughterer of innocents with sword in hand already standing over her. Helen, at these times, tried hard to force back her tears and to allay her mother's hysterical excitement, but she found the task a hard one to do, especially at a time when she herself would gladly have died in those beloved arms that were clasping her so fondly and so anxiously. If she could only have opened her heart to her mother, and shown her the unspeakable love that was rankling and festering at its bottom, it would have been a relief to the suffering daughter. Even the fearful sacrifice she was going to make of her young life, and all its bright hopes and dreams, could have been borne, she thought, a little more lightly, could her dear mother know of what she was suffering and why she submitted to it. But to the bitterness of the cup already full to overflowing was now added the consciousness that even that loving, self-sacrificing creature did not understand her, and perhaps thought that her daughter was about to marry Enoch Bloodstone, tempted by his wealth, — was, in fact, selling herself for base gold. Oh! could she but nestle her face in that mother's bosom once more, as she had done so often, and pour out her tale of sorrow, she could rise up the next moment, and go to the sacrifice bravely, singing a song of joy and triumph by the way. But it could not be. Her duty to her father overrode all personal considerations with her. She knew too well that to aid him she must suffer

in secret. That one word of complaint, one word of dissatisfaction with her lot, would instantly change all their plans. She knew her father well enough to know that he would break off the marriage, though he should be forever ruined and disgraced by the act, commencing the instant after its announcement. She would not turn her back upon him in his troubles to save herself from any fate. She could not do it. She must therefore bravely meet with a smiling face what was allotted to her.

"I shall be very happy with Mr. Bloodstone, dear mamma," she said, when she saw the look of doubt come over her mother's face.

"Yes, I know you have told me how noble and how generous he is, and how much you love him. Ah, me!" she sighed, "how beautiful it is to marry whom we love."

The wedding had been fixed for Thursday, but at the suggestion of Mr. Bloodstone, made on the Saturday previous to the wedding-day, the time was shortened. He would go with his bride to San Francisco for a fortnight, and while there would, he said, do what he could to hasten the construction of the pumps for clearing out the water in the mine. Would it not be better to be married early on Monday morning, and cross the mountains the same day? This suggestion was made in the parlor, in presence of Mr. Graham and his daughter. Matilda was in bed in her own room, and did not hear it. Mr. Graham turned to Helen, "You must be the one to answer that question," he said. "Of course, with me, anything that will hasten the resumption of work in the mine would be most agreeable."

For a moment, the mist came before Helen's eyes. The curtain, that had closed down before them weeks before, seemed to grow even darker and more impenetrable. She made an effort, and answered, "That day will be as agreeable to me as any." Then, as if feeling the equivocal nature of the answer, she added, "I am quite willing to have the day changed to Monday."

She did not dare to tell them what was upon her mind,—that she feared the effect of the announcement upon her mother. So the matter was agreed upon, and now but forty-eight hours lay between her and her future destiny.

When Mr. Bloodstone had retired, she told her father what had occurred to her—that her mother had not become reconciled, entirely, to the union with Mr. Bloodstone, and that she was in so nervous a condition, that she almost dreaded to an-

nounce to her the change of time that had been agreed upon. Her father could not understand this; he had seen nothing like unwillingness to the marriage in his wife; she would surely have mentioned to him, had she felt so about the matter. He would go and tell her himself. So he rose, and went to her room. In a few minutes, he returned. It had all been talked over between them, and she appeared, as he was sure she was, quite satisfied with the arrangement.

When Mr. Graham departed for his office, which he did directly after this, Helen went into her mother's room and took her hand. She expected to be asked about the change of the wedding-day, but no such question came.

"Sit down here, Baby," said the mother, "and stay with me, will you, darling?" This she said in the supplicating tone that had lately become habitual with her.

Helen did so, and her mother put her arms around her daughter, and drew her towards her.

"Don't go to the mine with Mr. Bloodstone, Baby darling; stay here with me."

"Go to the mine, mother?" repeated Helen; "I am not going to the mine. Why do you ask me that?"

"Have you not been there," said the mother, pushing back her hair, and looking eagerly in her daughter's face. "I thought you had just returned from the mine; it was your father, I suppose. Perhaps he spoke of it, and that brought the idea to my mind; I thought you had been down in the mine with Mr. Bloodstone. It was a strange thought, was it not?" Here she again pressed her daughter to her breast.

Helen was alarmed at this question. Could her mother be wandering in her mind? But she was soon reassured, for the invalid continued to converse with her upon general subjects, but without referring to the marriage.

Helen poured out, and gave to her some medicine left by the physician to soothe her nerves, and, seeing that her mother appeared disposed to be quiet if not to sleep, arose to go into the parlor. At the door, she was stopped by a call from the invalid.

"Baby."

"Yes, mother, here I am," she answered, stooping over the invalid.

Matilda raised herself up in the bed, and drew her daughter close to her, looking at her eagerly in the face. "I don't like

that man's plan of spending the honeymoon in the mine ; do you ?" Helen was now alarmed.

"Why, dear mother, what ails you ? No one is thinking of spending the honeymoon in the mine."

Matilda rubbed her face, "I think I must have been dreaming, dear Baby. I thought we were all to go into the mine for your honeymoon ; in fact, I thought we had gone thither. How queer that I should fancy such a thing. It almost seems to me now that I see it as I saw it then. You are sure there is nothing in it ?"

"Quite sure, dear mamma, such a thing would be impossible."

"Of course it would ; but I thought so, and the idea was so horrible as to give me a fearful shock."

"Don't think any more about it, dear mamma, and I will sit here by your side."

"Don't leave me, Helen. It seems to me, when you leave the room, that you are going down in that horrid mine, and that I shall never see you more."

"Don't think of it any more, darling mamma," and Helen took a seat by her mother, holding her hand lovingly in hers.

It was late in the evening when Mr. Graham returned ; he had been kept out by some engagement of importance. When he came in, he found Helen lying upon the bed, supporting her mother's head upon her breast. Matilda had been restless all the evening, and Helen had not left her side, even for an instant. She told her father how much worse her mother had grown.

"I will call the physician," he said. In five minutes Dr. Brierly had been called from his room, which was in the hotel close by, and approached the bedside of his patient.

Matilda heard his footsteps, and started up. "No ! no !" she cried, "you shall not."

She did not recognize the kind face of the doctor. To the mother, it was the slaughterer of innocents, who had at last broken down the door, and now had driven her to the wall. She seized Helen, who still lay upon the side of the bed, and clasped her tightly in her arms. "Go away," she whispered ; and her eye glared with the fury of the she-wolf defending her whelps. "You shall not take her."

"Mamma, dear mamma," said Helen, "it is only the doctor. It is Dr. Brierly, mamma, who has come to see you."

"Is it ?" whispered Matilda ; "I thought it was that man,

come to take you down in the mine," and slowly and hesitatingly she released her hold upon her daughter.

The doctor felt her pulse in silence. It was nothing serious, he thought, if only quiet and repose could be secured. Her mind must be kept quite free from any sort of excitement. If there was any subject of domestic importance that gave her uneasiness, it must be absolutely kept from her, and she must be gratified by at least apparent acquiescence in her desires, whatever they might be. This done, no apprehension need be entertained. The patient's constitution was not seriously impaired; but she must be carefully dealt with, and, above all things, she must not be subjected to any sort of excitement. If his injunctions were lost sight of, he could not answer for the consequences. He left a soothing draught, and withdrew.

The medicine proved highly beneficial. Matilda passed a comfortable night, having slept well, and in the morning was herself once more. She had not seemed so well for two months, and all in the house were in correspondingly good spirits; but the wedding was not spoken of by any one; its discussion was dropped, apparently by common consent.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### MR. GRAHAM VISITS THE FOURTH LEVEL.

MR. GRAHAM remained in the house during the forenoon, sitting with his invalid wife in her bed-room. Charley Hunter came in, and talked for a time with Helen in the parlor. It was Sunday morning, and the hour for divine service came on, even in Virginia City. For with all the wild roughness of the place, worthy ministers had penetrated the wilderness, even at that early period, and those who chose to do so could hear the word of God discoursed in more than one unpretentious wooden chapel, on the rugged sides of Mount Davidson.

"We cannot go to church," said Matilda; "but Helen can sing us some hymns of praise to God, for his mercy to us. Let

us not forget the day, because we are in this wild land, lest we ourselves be forgotten."

And so Helen sang for her mother, "Gloria in Excelsis," in her rich, clear voice, that brought tears to the sufferer's eyes. In the afternoon, Mr. Graham rose to go out for a walk. "I have been in the house all day," he said; "I will walk up by the mine, and see if anything new has taken place." Matilda shuddered at the bare mention of the mine. It had been disposed of by her amongst the unpronounceable words; she called it "that place." She clung to his hand, and said, —

"Do not go to that place, Edmond, to-day; I dread to have anybody who is dear to me go thither."

"Oh, you must not have such notions, Matilda. I will come directly back to you; I will not be absent an hour."

Saying this, he stooped and kissed his wife. "Compose your mind, darling, and go to sleep. If you do so, I am sure you will be better by the time I am back."

Helen sat by the bed; she watched her mother's eyes as they looked yearningly after her husband. When he passed from her view, they filled with tears. Then she listened till the sound of his footsteps had expired in the distance, and when they could be no longer heard, she turned her face to the wall, and moaned piteously, "I shall never see my darling husband again, in this world."

"Oh, dear mamma, how can you say so?" cried Helen. "He will be back in a few minutes. I will call him now," and she ran the door, to stop her father, remembering what the doctor had said about her mother's treatment. But she was too late, he was beyond recall. Returning, she found the invalid sitting up in bed.

"Do not call him back, Baby," she said. "I know that I ought not to imagine such things. I will try to do better, my precious. Forgive me for my silly notions."

"Oh, darling mother," cried Helen; "do not ask your baby's forgiveness; you, who are so good, and so sweet." And she lay down by her mother's side, and took the invalid's head once more upon her breast, and calmed her as well as she could.

Mr. Graham found the weather fine when he issued from the house; and, to enjoy the fresh air, he strolled up the side of the mountain, back of his mine's mouth, coming upon the hoisting sheds, after a half hour's walk, from the rear, and not in the usual way. Being out of breath, he took a seat on a pile of

wood that, when the mine was being worked, had been provided for the engine fires. He had not been sitting long, when he heard voices in conversation at the mouth of the shaft. This attracted his attention. There was no work going on in the mine, and he knew that, ordinarily, there would be only the watchman left in charge of the works about the place. By turning his head slightly, he could see the persons. They proved to be Mr. Enoch Bloodstone, his superintendent, with the engineer of the mine, the chief miner, and two other late employees, and, besides these, he saw that they were accompanied by Mr. Marvin Withergreen, president of the Pactolus Company. These people being at the hoisting shed was not a matter to be wondered at, and Mr. Graham was on the point of getting up from his seat and going to address them, when, to his unspeakable amazement, they all, one after another, stepped into the cage, which stood open at the top of the shaft, and, before Mr. Graham could find words, or even thoughts, to express, they had disappeared down the mine. The noxious gases that were said to have taken possession of the mine, had not, to Mr. Graham's knowledge, been removed. Then how could these people boldly plunge down to that which, if he had been properly informed, was to meet certain death. When he reached the pit's mouth, the cage was already hundreds of feet down, and, before the man, who was attending at the fall, returned his salute, he ceased paying out, and the cage was stopped by the descending party to enter a side drift.

"Good-morning, Mr. Graham," said the watchman, respectfully touching his hat.

"I thought the mine was filled with damp," said Mr. Graham. "When were they removed so that it could be entered?"

"I do not know," said the man; "I am not the regular watchman on duty here; I have been put here for this occasion only. The regular watchman is my brother, and I have just come over the mountain to pay him a visit; he has gone down with Mr. Bloodstone, to look at the condition of the mine. They said nothing about any damp. I only arrived in Virginia yesterday, and know nothing about the mine."

The truth was, that no poisonous gases had ever existed in the mine. The whole story was an invention of Bloodstone's to keep people, and especially, Mr. Graham, out of it. One of the workmen, in the secret, had been placed in charge of the works, as watchman, and all others had been carefully excluded. By this plan, Bloodstone had visited, as often as he



pleased, the fourth level, where the "chimney" of ore was situated. The watchman had never been down during any of these visits ; but this day he had insisted on being allowed to descend with the others. He wished to gloat over his share in the plunder, as well as to watch his fellow-conspirators, and see that he was not cheated by them. To this Bloodstone had consented, in the belief that Mr. Graham would not visit the mine on Sunday, especially at a time when his wife was so ill. He was also thrown off his guard by the near approach of his marriage. He thought that, whatever might occur, that the following morning, by making him Mr. Graham's son-in-law, would place him in a position to free himself from the gang of plunderers with which he was now surrounded. The watchman's brother being in the works on a visit was placed at the shaft to let them down, and draw them up again ; but with positive orders to allow no one in the shed while they were below, and especially, to let no one enter the mine. The man had arrived the day before, and had seen Mr. Graham at the shed, and understood him to be the owner, but knew nothing of the plot in which his brother and the others were so deeply complicated.

Mr. Graham saw nothing very extraordinary in what was taking place before his eyes. It was only evident to him that something had happened very recently, to either neutralize the noxious air in the mine or to wholly remove it. Whatever that had been, it was only a matter of congratulation ; it was an absolute gain of no inconsiderable value.

"Will they be up soon ?" he asked of the watchman.

"They did not say, sir ; I am to stay here and wait for them, and keep everybody out of the mine."

The order had been given in general terms, and it had not occurred to the man, nor did it occur to Mr. Graham, that it could apply to him, the owner. After considering a moment, he said, —

"I will go down and see what they are doing. I had not heard of the removal of the damp, and I am curious to see how the mine looks." "Besides," he added, "I have not been in the fourth level for several months, and a great deal of work was done there while I was away last winter."

"You are right, sir ; my brother tells me that the whole hill is honey combed, in that level, in every direction ; from what he says, it is as much as he can do to find the way about

amongst the drifts, and galleries, and mouse-holes in that part of the mine."

Mr. Graham stepped into the cage which had been drawn up by the man while he was talking about descending.

"You must have a light, sir."

Here the man rummaged about the place, and produced a candle partly consumed.

"Here is one, sir ; as soon as I strike a match."

This he did ; and lighting the candle, gave it to Mr. Graham.

"Take some more matches, sir," said the man handing him a box.

Mr. Graham took the matches, and then was let down slowly into the bowels of the earth. The watchman lowered the owner of the mine carefully down, till the mark indicated that the cage was opposite the mouth of the drift of the fourth level. Here he stopped ; and there being nothing more for him to do, sat down, lighted his pipe, and began to smoke to pass the time, till the party should signal him to draw them up again. He did not expect to have long to wait. It was Sunday, and in the afternoon. They could not find occupation in an unworked mine, partly flooded, to detain them long. He smoked out his pipe, and knocking out the ashes walked stolidly about for a half hour, and then came back by the lift and and smoked another one. He wanted to get away to walk in the town, which was strange to him, and was impatient of his unusual employment. Still the expected signal did not come. He had been waiting more than three hours, and it was beginning to grow dark, when at last, the bell rang "hoist up." He pulled away with a will ; but when the cage reached the surface, the grumbling watchman found that his task was not yet ended. His brother, the regular watchman of the mine alone came up. The others remained down, while he had come up in search of instruments. "Go down to the office of the Pactolus Company," the regular watchman said to his visiting brother, "and fetch up a box that you will find on the president's desk. You know where it is ; you were there yesterday. The box contains a blow pipe and lamps, a microscope, and some chemicals. And look sharp about it," he called out, as the brother walked off down the road. It was a long walk down the hill to the Pactolus office, and a longer one up the same mountain-side back again. The visitor went both stages of his errand as fast as he could go ; but he found when he entered the shed, that he had been away half an hour.

"You have been very slow," grumbled the brother to his temporary substitute. "Do you expect gentlemen to wait in the mine all night, while you go strolling about like an old maid taking the air?"

The visitor said he had been as quick as he could.

"Well, it is too late; they waited awhile, and then got tired of it," said the watchman; "they have all left and gone home. If you are going back to California in the morning, you had better have your dinner and get to bed, for you must rise early."

The visitor agreed to this advice and went about taking it. Mr. Graham, so the watchman told his brother before he retired, had come to them in the mine while they were below, and with the others, had examined the rock in search of metallic indications. The instruments not coming as quickly as they had expected them, and the hour growing late, they had suddenly abandoned further examination of the rock for the day, and had signalled to be hoisted up. That they had all been drawn up by the watchman, and had gone away down into the town together. "But it is all right," added the regular watchman; "the instruments you brought from the Pactolus office are here now, and will be ready for them in the morning, when they go down again. But you will be then on the coach, on your way back over the mountains."



## CHAPTER XXIX.

### MR. GRAHAM HAS GONE UPON A JOURNEY.

HELEN observed, almost as soon as her father left the hotel for his intended walk, that the change for the better in her mother's condition, so marked in the morning, was rapidly giving way. She sat by the bed of the invalid, and talked to her, holding her hand, and trying to reassure her as much as possible.

She appeared to be again wandering in her mind. Mr. Gra-

ham had gone into the mine, so she said, in company with Bloodstone.

✓ "He ought not to go with that man," moaned the invalid. "I told Edmond not to go with him to that place, and now he is gone there, and I shall not see him any more. That man will not let him come back; his unhappy wife will never see him again."

Helen sat anxiously waiting for her father to return, as she knew it was nearly time for him to do. His presence, she knew, would do more for her mother, than the physician could accomplish, with his most potent drugs; and, besides, as soon as he would come, she would have him call Dr. Brierly.

Time passed slowly, but surely, along, till she could see from her window that the sun was going down behind Gold Hill. The great gong of the hotel sounded the call for dinner, and she heard the people flocking through the halls, eagerly rushing to swallow their food.

Had it been a week-day, she would not have thought of her father's absence as unusual. But it was Sunday, and he could have nothing to detain him; and, besides, he had promised his invalid wife to be back promptly, and he must know that in her condition, his presence was of importance in the sick chamber.

For an hour, even for two hours longer, she mustered together every possible reason of which she could think, showing it to be absolutely certain that he would be home within ten minutes. But then the matter began to be alarming, and from that time she set about searching for equally ingenious theories to account for his absence, and to show that it would not be strange if he should be yet detained for an hour, or even two hours, longer.

All of these arguments, first upon one side, and then upon the other, she urged to her mother as good reasons for freeing her mind from that alarm which was already seizing hold of herself.

At eleven o'clock she could wait no longer, and, ringing the bell, she sent for Dr. Brierly. He came directly, and found his patient much agitated. She was sitting up in the bed, with Helen by her side, trying vainly to calm her fears.

"He has gone to that place with that man," was the burden of her lamentation. "That man would not let him come back!"

Helen told the doctor as quickly as she could that her father

had gone out in the afternoon for a walk, saying that he would be back in an hour, but that he had not returned, and that she could now think of no reason for his longer delay.

The physician spoke to Matilda, and assured her that there was no cause for uneasiness. He then gave her an opiate.

"She must sleep," he whispered to Helen, "that is all she needs. One good night of repose will almost restore her to health. I have no fears for her, whatever, but she must sleep. I will send out directly and have inquiry made for Mr. Graham. Do not be alarmed. We will soon find out where he is."

The doctor withdrew, and left Helen with her mother. Observing that the medicine was about to produce the desired effect, she slipped off her dress and lay down with her mother in the bed, holding her in her arms to calm her agitation as much as possible.

At one o'clock a messenger came to the door from the doctor. He had heard of Mr. Graham through his superintendent, Mr. Enoch Bloodstone.

That gentleman had sent word, in response to the doctor's inquiries, that his principal had been called suddenly to go out of town, upon important business, and would not be home for several days, perhaps even for weeks. But that he, Mr. Bloodstone, would call in the morning, and explain everything to the family.

Matilda had yielded to the effects of the opiate long before this message came, and was now sleeping as calmly as if no thought of trouble had ever crossed her path in life.

Helen closed the door upon the messenger, and walked to the centre of the room, and stood there. Her blood seemed to have stopped suddenly in her veins.

Where was she? What had happened to her? Her first impulse was to fly to her mother, as she would have done in her childhood, when some infantile disaster had come upon her. There was comfort, there was protection, where she had always found it, at the side of that one who had never failed to shield her from danger and from misfortune.

She staggered through the door to the bedside, with a vague idea of getting within those arms that had so often encircled her in her childish griefs. In another instant she would have been prostrate upon her mother's breast, hiding from some indefinable horror that was pursuing her, when the light of the lamp revealed to her the pallid features of the invalid, made haggard by the shadow of the pillow ends, that sprung up,

white and ghastly, under the pressure of the sleeping head. She stopped, gazed a moment, and slowly awoke to the sense of her loneliness and desolation.

She was no longer the Baby, flying to her darling mother with her petty story of momentary troubles. She was now, in her turn, the mother, — the stricken, widowed mother; and there lay her baby, her helpless, ailing, invalid baby, before her, to be nursed, to be comforted, cherished and healed. She could not, dared not move, scarcely to breathe, lest she wake the sufferer.

She moved softly to the sofa and sat down to consider. Then she collected her scattered thoughts, and tried to go over all of the ground to see what had really happened.

She had been indeed fearfully disturbed in mind, for she had forgotten the impending disaster of disasters yet to come. Now this rolled back again upon her, crushing her still lower. To-morrow morning she was to marry "that man"; for she had contracted her mother's horror of even thinking of his name.

That some fearful misfortune had overtaken her father, she felt but too positive. That he would have gone away out of the town, at such a time, and under such circumstances, for weeks, or days, or even hours, she felt to be utterly inconsistent with his character. But of what could have happened to him, she could form no notion.

In the morning, "that man" would come and tell her the extent of her misfortune. Why had he not come directly to her? Why had he left her to suffer this night of horror? Was it not enough that he was going to marry her in the morning, without adding to that enormity a concealment that might kill her darling mother the night before? She was sure that the story of his going out of town was a subterfuge of some sort.

So she sat, and dreaded, and hoped, and wondered, till daylight sneaked in at the blinds, and till the morning sun followed it over the Humboldt mountains, and glared boldly and viciously through the window, at the forsaken girl. At last her mother awoke and called her.

"Baby," she said, kindly, "are you up, dear?"

"Yes, mother, I have been up a half an hour, and am already dressed."

"Where is your father, darling?"

The daughter could not tell the mother the truth.

"He has just gone to the mine, mother. He did not wish to awake you out of your sleep, and so went away."

The mother sighed at the mention of the mine.

It was the black spot upon her life. Helen saw with pleasure that her mother had been greatly benefited by her night's rest. She was again clear in mind and greatly refreshed. "Now," thought she, "if my father was only here all would be soon well again." But the horrible dream of the night before still hung over her. It was to be realized in some manner this morning, and every footstep she heard in the hall caused her to start and tremble. It might be that man coming with a sentence of death for them all. This Monday morning had been a dreadful day in the future to her; but now it had come, with additional and unforeseen horrors. It was her appointed wedding morning. But that circumstance had now sunk out of sight, beneath the blacker fate that appeared to have seized upon the day and appointed it to more fearful deeds of woe.

She prepared food for her mother, and then urged her to again try to sleep. "I will sit in the parlor and sew," she said, "and so not disturb you."

Matilda said that her precious Baby's presence never disturbed her, and that she could sleep more freely with her in the room. But the daughter said "No, it is better for me to sit here, within call."

The truth was that she expected Bloodstone to arrive momentarily, with his horrible explanation, and this she knew her mother must not hear. So she sat tremblingly by the door to stop him with his story as soon as he should enter.

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## CHAPTER XXX.

### THE WEDDING IS POSTPONED.

HELEN did not have long to wait for Enoch Bloodstone. He came soon, but not alone. He brought with him a stranger, "the man who has perhaps seen my father fall over a precipice, and perish," thought Helen, staring at him with eyes almost start-

ing from her head. She wished to divine his fearful story, if possible, without his telling it. If he spoke, her mother might overhear him through the thin partition. She put her fingers upon her lips to impress the necessity of caution, and pointed to the sick room to warn him not to speak loud enough to be heard there. The man only bowed low. He appeared to have nothing to tell.

"Where is my father?" she asked in a whisper, and then paused for a reply.

The man looked at Bloodstone. "I do not know," he answered; "I have not seen him."

"Oh, that will be all right," said Bloodstone, in a sharp, business voice. "I will tell you all about that by and by. This is Mr. Marshall, the 'justice of the peace.' He has come to perform the marriage ceremony; he has no time to wait. As soon as it is over I will tell you all about your father. It is a private affair, and concerns only our own family."

This he said, looking hard at Helen, as if to give her to understand that the justice of the peace was not to know of the matter.

Helen for a moment stood speechless. She had forgotten all about the wedding. It had been driven from her mind by an overwhelming invasion of more terrible misfortunes, sweeping all before them. The fresh calamity, that she felt sure had occurred to her father, had forced her own troubles out of her mind to make room for greater griefs. But her mien, as she stood in the centre of the room, was enough to tie the tongue of Enoch Bloodstone. At last she spoke, but still in a whisper, —

✓ "Have you come at such a time as this to marry me? You, Mr. Enoch Bloodstone! At a time when my father is perhaps lying dead at the foot of some precipice, or perishing by degrees in some horrid pit where he has fallen. At a time when my poor, suffering mother is only listening with anxious ears to hear this family secret which you pretend to bear, to die a raving maniac in her helpless heart-broken daughter's arms! At such a time as this, do you dare to come to me to be married, and by a justice of the peace!" At each word, she seemed to rise in the air, and grow more lofty. "Go, sir!" she said, turning to the frightened official. "The poorest servant of the land claims and obtains the blessing of the church upon her nuptials. We shall not require your services, at least. Go!"



The door closed upon the retreating justice of the peace, before the words were quite finished.

Turning to Bloodstone, without stopping even to take breath, she demanded, still in a whisper, that was felt rather than heard, —

“Where is my father?”

Enoch Bloodstone had evidently come with the intention of carrying off things with the same high hand that he had found so successful on the occasion of his engagement to Helen six weeks before. He had prepared himself for the same easy conquest, and his tone had the harsh, high key, and his manner was the same swaggering, insolent, business manner of that day. But one glance at the defiant being that now stood before him in the glory of her suffering, rising up, as it were, to get her head above the ocean of affliction that seemed closing over her, told him plainly that such was no longer his winning card, and that impudence would not now avail him.

“Sit down, Miss Graham, and I will explain all about it,” he said.

He drew a chair up by the sofa, and offered it to her; without speaking, she took the seat. He sat down upon the sofa.

“Miss Graham —,” he began.”

But here she stopped him with a gesture.

“Do not speak so loud,” she said.

He continued, in a slightly reduced voice, —

“Your father, as you must have been aware, has been for some years past engaged in exploring his mine, with the object, if possible, of discovering within it the vein of silver-ore, known as the Comstock Lode. When I arrived here, a year ago, he had already expended a vast sum of money in the work. He had not only spent all of the money that he himself possessed, but he had contracted debts to a very considerable extent, which were to be paid when he should be able to raise money from the silver supposed to be in the mine.”

“But,” whispered Helen, interrupting him, “I cannot wait to hear this long history; tell me of my father; where is he, and what has happened to him?”

“Excuse me, Miss Graham; I am coming to that; it is part of my story. Nothing has happened to your father, and he is in perfect safety. The truth is, that he has gone on with his vast expenditure until he can go no farther. Of late the demands of his creditors have been so clamorous, that it was impossible for

him to face them any longer. He has therefore, very prudently, in my judgment, withdrawn himself temporarily from the Territory, until an arrangement can be made so that he can again return."

Helen stared at Bloodstone with a stupefied look ; she did not appear to understand him quite.

"Do you mean to tell me, sir, that my father has run away from his creditors?"

"Well, Miss Graham, that is about the way the thing stands, —but with this circumstance in his favor: that he will come back again just as soon as I can make the necessary arrangements. The necessary compromise, I shall proceed to make the moment we are married. I shall, of course, not want my father-in-law to be dodging about the prairies like a runaway horse-thief any longer than I can help it."

"Then why did you let him run away like a horse-thief?" demanded Helen, with more coolness than she had shown before. "Why have you, his intended son-in-law, permitted this disgrace to come upon him at all, if you are so unwilling to have it continue?"

"You are a woman, Miss Graham, and cannot understand these things. Had your father remained here, I could not have made a favorable compromise. Indeed, I could not have settled with his creditors at all ; I should have been obliged to pay all of the claims in full."

"What was the objection to paying them in full? Were they not just claims?"

"You cannot, I say again, understand these things, Miss Graham. Women never can understand matters of business. It would have made a difference of at least a hundred thousand dollars had he remained. The claims are all held by San Francisco merchants and manufacturers. Now that he is out of the way, you understand, we can, while we are there on our wedding-tour, take them all up for about one-quarter of the amount. It will be thought that I do this as his son-in-law, just for the credit of the family ; do you see the point, Miss Graham?"

"Then I am to understand that my father, by your advice, has run away, leaving his wife upon a sick bed, perhaps to die of anxiety on account of his absence, and all to enable you to turn your wedding-tour into an expedition for the defrauding his creditors of their just claims."

This she said with a tone of such unspeakable scorn, that

even the thick skin of Enoch Bloodstone was penetrated, and he was made to wince under the lash.

"Indeed, Miss Graham, you are too severe in your strictures upon a transaction which, I assure you, takes place in this country almost every day."

"Then it is high time for all respectable people to get out of the country as quickly as possible," she answered, with continued scorn in her tone and manner. "I have never been taught to believe in such a code of morals, nor can I conceive how my father has been brought to it. Whither has he gone?"

"He left last night, in the overland coach; though that must as yet remain a secret, at least for several hours. He will be in Salt Lake City by to-morrow morning and quite beyond pursuit."

"When will he return, sir?"

"He cannot come back, Miss Graham, as I said before, with any degree of prudence, till his liabilities are arranged in some manner. That I shall attend to as soon as the marriage is over."

"You must attend to it before that, Mr. Bloodstone; for I will never be your wife, nor the wife of any man living, while I am the daughter of a fugitive."

"Do you mean to say, Miss Graham, that you do not intend to marry me to-day?"

"I do most decidedly say it. I shall not think of consenting to the ceremony, unless my father be present and consenting to it. This engagement was brought about, as you well know, by your influence over him. I promised to marry you because it would benefit him, and for no other reason. It appears that it has not been of any benefit to him, at least not yet, and it may never be. It has not prevented him from being forced to secretly and disgracefully fly from the country; to run away from his creditors; and therefore I can see of no advantage it has been or will be to him. You say that you intend to avail yourself of your honeymoon visit to San Francisco, to arrange, as you call it, with the creditors. I know nothing of that; I only know that, at a time when my father's presence was of absolute necessity at home, to save perhaps my mother's life, you have permitted him to be driven away from his family like a common malefactor, to lurk about the country or to sneak away in disgrace out of it. I shall not marry, as I said to you once before, unless my father is present at the altar to give me away. When

that is the case, I am ready to fulfil my promise, but not before."

✓ "But is that fair, Miss Graham?" he asked; "suppose your father should never come back, — for you know some accident might happen to him in his travels, so that he could not return to be present at the wedding, — am I, in such a case, to be deprived of the honor, the joy, of possessing your hand?"

"Yes, you are," said Helen. "If anything happens to my father because of this disgraceful affair, I shall consider you responsible for it, and I will never marry you!"

Here Helen gradually broke down. She could not maintain her lofty mien longer. She burst into a flood of tears, and clasping her hands together implored him for pity upon the wretched family.

"Mr. Bloodstone, believe me, that I will gladly be your wife, if it will bring back my dear father. Oh, let him come home to my mother, who will surely die if he is kept away. Only let him come home, and here are my hand and my poor, shattered heart. You shall be welcome to them. I will marry you the next moment after he comes into this room. Believe me, I will do so. Oh, you can bring him to us; you can make my darling mother well again; and, when that is done, if you wish her unhappy daughter, she shall be yours, — yours with my blessing. Forgive me for the hard things I have said to you." Here she held out her hands imploringly to him. "Bring him back to us and take all we have else in the world." She could go no farther, for her sobs choked her voice. Bloodstone arose and came to her.

"Come," he said, "cheer up, Miss Graham. I will bring back your father, on my honor as a gentleman. But you must let me do it in my own way. Let me call in a justice of the peace; or, if that does not please you, I will have a minister, and let us be married."

He thought he had gained his point, but he was mistaken.

"No," she said, "not now, Mr. Bloodstone; I cannot trust you. You have broken faith with me in allowing my father to be driven out of the country by his difficulties. But bring to me a letter from my father, stating that still he favors your suit and it will gratify him, and I will then marry you. Will that content you?" she said, imploringly.

"I have already brought you one letter from him to that effect," answered Bloodstone. "Your father does not want to be writing me up all of the time."

"True, sir; but that was before this change in his circumstances. He may not be still friendly to your suit. Only convince me that he is so, and that my becoming your wife will give him to us again; and bring with you, at the same time, your justice of the peace, for I will marry you on the spot."

Mr. Bloodstone was on the point of replying to this, when a heavy fall was heard at the door of Matilda's room.

"Gracious heavens!" cried Helen, springing up, "what was that?" With one bound she was at the door. Turning to Bloodstone, her face pale with terror, she could only say, —

"Fetch the doctor. My poor mother is dead." And there she lay upon the floor, where she had swooned and fallen. She had risen from her bed, and coming to the door, had heard a great part of the conversation between her daughter and Bloodstone, until, at last overcome by her feelings, she could hear no more, and had fallen insensible on the floor. The physician was soon in the room, and assistance was obtained. Restoratives soon brought the lady to something like life again. But she had had a severe shock, and her mind had been seriously affected. Dr. Brierly repeated his opiate with the same advice to Helen.

"She must sleep, Miss Graham; she only needs rest and repose. But that she must have. Her constitution is not seriously impaired, and the proper treatment will restore her to health."

The doctor stayed with them till Matilda had been brought under the influence of his treatment.

"I have done all that medical skill can do," he said, on going away. "It remains now for her friends to assist nature in doing the rest. Her mind must be put at ease. If she has afflictions or misfortunes, they must be concealed from her or removed. If she has any great desire, it must be gratified, if it be possible, immediately. If this cannot be, then she must be made to believe that it will be done at an early moment." And so he went away, leaving Helen alone with the invalid.

Bloodstone had taken himself off directly that the doctor came. He did not seem to be willing to witness the suffering of the, for a time, apparently dying wife, or the grief of the devoted and terror-stricken daughter.

The news of the flight of Mr. Graham had already become public in the town. Knots of men could be seen about the street corners, eagerly discussing the extraordinary circumstance, for such it was. That Mr. Graham should fail to pay his debts was not a matter to create the least surprise in Washoe at the

time of which we write. The wonder was that he had held out so long. It was admitted by all that he had gone on a whole year longer than any one had ever expected him to do. But the inexplicable mystery lay in the fact that he had thought it necessary to fly from the Territory, or even to abscond.

Why should he do so? There was no law for imprisonment for debt. His freedom to go at large was not in danger, and, as for the obloquy which it might be thought would attach to failure, in a mining community, that was absolutely nothing. Delving in the bowels of the earth for the precious metals is a pursuit so uncertain in character, and so filled with disappointments in practice, that every man engaged in it feels himself liable to be placed in that situation at any moment. So long as his debts have been contracted with a reasonable amount of good faith, that is, with the intention at the time to pay, his being afterwards prevented from doing so in consequence of his mine not proving remunerative, involves inconveniences of various kinds, but never anything like disgrace. Merchants dealing with mining communities acknowledge this uncertainty, and make allowances for it. The profits are considerable, for the chances of payment are impaired by the treacherous nature of the chief source of the wealth of the community. This was the main point under discussion in the case of the sudden and extraordinary disappearance of Mr. Graham. "Why should he have run away?" said all, with one voice. "The most his creditors could have done was to seize his mines, and that they will do anyhow." But, after much discussion, the majority settled down to the notion that it was the old gentleman's pride that had driven him to the extraordinary measure. Mr. Graham's conduct was discussed much as the last act of a suicide is apt to be discussed. The deed being unaccountable upon any ordinary rule of human action, each individual vied with his fellows in finding some reason more absurd and improbable than the other.

"It was his honesty," cried one. "I never knew so high-toned a man in my life. He might have been worth his millions if he had only made a joint stock company of his mine and sold it out. But no, he would never say that he had struck the vein, till he had done so, and, of course, such a man can't sell shares. Look at Withergreen of the Pactolus, he is one of the richest men at 'The Bay.' He wouldn't have a mine that had an ounce of pay rock in it. If he should strike the vein, he would put his shares on the board the next day and sell all out clean.

He makes his money by stealing the funds raised by assessments on the stock. Old Graham is too honest for that ; so he is too honest for the Territory and has left it, like a sensible fellow."

Another thought he had cleared out because his wife was dangerously ill ; "the old gentleman was so tender-hearted that he couldn't bear to see her suffer, so he cut his stick and left the place." "No, that is not the reason," said a third. "His daughter is the handsomest woman in the world, so they say, and the father was ambitious to marry her to some great man, and he could have done it, had she obeyed him, but she fell in love with his superintendent, a dirty fellow named Bloodstone, and wanted to marry him. The old man wouldn't consent, and as she persists in her resolution, he wouldn't stay to see himself disgraced."

Such were the conjectures of people who only saw a wholly unnecessary step taken by a man in difficulties.

It soon, however, settled down to be believed by the public, that Mr. Graham had been an honest gentleman, with overmuch pride and of a highly sensitive nature, and that, in a moment of weakness, he had taken a step which would be perhaps soon retraced.

"He won't be gone long," said most people. "His wife and daughter are still here, and he will come back to look after them before long."

All were sorry for the honest gentleman, but his misfortunes hadn't been exceptional in the new Territory ; half of the men who were sorry for him had been in as great straits as he was, when he ran away, twice thrice, perhaps a score of times, and thought they would be very fortunate indeed could they be assured that they would not be so again as many times more. They were sorry for him, and their sympathy would at any moment have taken a more practical form, had they supposed that either he or any of his family were in need of a more substantial kind of charity.



## CHAPTER XXXI.

## MRS. GRAHAM GOES UPON A JOURNEY.

ON the night that was to have been her wedding night, Helen was left alone with her mother. The doctor called at eleven o'clock, and found Matilda still sleeping under the effects of his medicine.

"She is doing well," he said, "and only needs tranquilizing to wholly recover."

When he was gone, Helen drew her chair up by her mother's bed, and turning down the light, sat watching till morning. About nine o'clock, Matilda awoke, and called her daughter. She was still weak, but quite calm.

"Tell me, Baby," she said, "what that man told you about your father's going away; I could not hear it all."

Helen hesitated, but her mother continued, —

"I can bear it now, without harm to me."

Then Helen told her that her father had been advised by Mr. Bloodstone to withdraw himself from the Territory for a time, till his affairs could be arranged with his creditors.

Mrs. Graham listened to the story calmly, putting occasional questions upon points that she did not understand.

When Helen had finished, her mother lay in silence for some time.

"It is very strange, she said, "your father went away saying that he was going to the mine, and he has never deceived me in his life. He must have gone to the mine, Helen." Then she lay a little while longer and continued, —

"If that man's story be true, we will have a letter from your father within a very few days, will we not, my Baby?"

"Yes, mamma, he will, no doubt, write to us from the first convenient place."

"Where will that be, Helen?"

"From Salt Lake City, I suppose, mamma, as he journeys eastward. He will, no doubt, write directly that he arrived there."



"And his letter ; when will it reach us ?"

"This is Tuesday morning ; papa went away on Sunday evening ; we should hear from him by Saturday evening, without fail."

"Well, we shall know by Saturday if the man's story be true or false," she said ; and so the conversation ended for the time.

The good Doctor Brierly stepped in for a friendly call a half dozen times each day. "He did not come to see Mrs. Graham," he said, with that delicacy and tact which seems so natural to medical gentleman. "It was no longer necessary to do so, for she was getting on so well now, that she could afford to 'throw physic to the dogs.' He was just passing in the hall, and looked in to see that his nurse," as he called Helen, "was not overdoing herself."

But his cheerful voice and presence worked wonders, and each day the invalid gained strength and what was better, tranquility.

Matilda was herself once more, in all save one respect. She appeared to have an unnatural sensation of horror at the ever-present idea of Enoch Bloodstone ; she could not drive that man out of her mind. Though she seldom referred to him, except by indirection, yet it was plain to Helen that she thought more about him than was good for her. This was especially evinced in her unwillingness to permit her daughter to leave the room, or even to sit in a part of it where she could not see her. She seldom gave any reason for this morbid anxiety for her daughter's safety, but Helen suspected the secret of it from the first.

One day, when she wished to go into the parlor for some reason, her mother called her to the bed-side and beseeched her, in pitiful tones, not to go with that man.

"Stay with me, Baby," she cried, with tears in her eyes. "He has taken all that I love, save only you, and now he has come to take you also ;—do not leave me."

Helen calmed her mother as well as she could. "It is not Mr. Bloodstone, dear mamma. He has not come for me, and if he does come, I shall not go with him."

But Matilda drew her child to her arms, and folded her convulsively in them.

"The slaughterer of innocents was at the door, with his reeking sword, and she would defend her first-born with her life."

From this time, Helen could not safely leave the room, even for an instant, day or night. Matilda appeared well enough, so long as she could see her Baby present before her eyes, and hear her voice in the room. She must have Baby's hand in hers when she slept, and to withdraw it was to awaken her.

The doctor was now in and out of the room every half hour throughout the day, but his excuses for coming were always so ingeniously formed that even Helen thought that Virginia must be a healthy place, and that the poor doctor's time hung heavily on his hands.

She found that she was well served in all things. Mrs. Fogg, the wife of the hotel keeper, took early note of the distress in No. 16, and appeared to be always in the parlor, or within easy call.

Charley Hunter, who had never lost sight of his strange employment, now spent nearly the whole of his days sitting, like a sentinel, patiently, and bolt upright, in the parlor, ready to comfort or assist Helen, when required to do so; but he did not have an opportunity to more than speak with her, a word at the door, for a whole day at a time, as Helen was kept so close at her mother's bed-side.

Jack Gowdy had arrived on Monday evening, from over the mountains, and learned of the mysterious flight of Mr. Graham. It did not surprise him greatly. "The old gentleman was always too honest for this country," he said. Then he declared his opinion to the effect that Mr. Graham had been driven out of the Territory by his dread of facing what others met with brazen assurance.

But Jack did not forget the family, though he did not call at No. 16. during that trip. He repaired at once to the office of the hotel, and asked for the landlord. When that gentleman made his appearance, the stage-driver called him aside.

"Fogg," said he, "they say old Graham has sloped for Salt Lake, and left his family here; and as he vamosed to get out of the way of his creditors, I don't suppose they have got any too much coin. They may have some, but not a hatfull, and it takes a bushel to live in this country, a week. I just happened, as I came up stairs, to remember that I owed the old man five hundred dollars that he lent me last week, when I was a little hard up for cash. Now, without saying anything about it, I want to give that money to you to be applied to paying the expenses of the family, till they hear from him. Do you understand me, Fogg?"

"Yes," said the landlord, in a tone that showed evident marks of gathering displeasure, "I understand you, but I don't believe a word you say. There is not a man in Washoe Territory, outside of a lunatic asylum; that would lend you two dollars and a half, Jack. I see through your dodge; you want to give the women five hundred dollars. That is all right, and I have no doubt they will need it before long; but it won't be to pay hotel bills with. You can't lend them money in that way through me. Ben Fogg may not know how to keep much of an hotel, but he don't turn distressed women out of the one that he does keep, whether they have a hatfull of money, or whether they have not got a red cent. He doesn't run his hotel on that principle. When you hear that he does, you can come around with your coin." This said, and without waiting to hear Jack's apologies, the indignant landlord turned his back, and walked off, leaving the stage-driver standing discomfitted at the office window. ✓

The next trip, Jack's coach looked more like a perambulating hot-house, than a mail-coach. It was covered with all sorts of flowers, in boxes and pots, and the locker under the driver's seat was filled with fruit, all destined to No. 16, American Eagle Hotel. When he arrived, he immediately mounted the stairs with his movable garden in his arms. Charley Hunter was on guard at the door, and received him and his offerings. "She can't leave her mother's bed-side," he said, in answer to Jack's inquiry; "she has not even been in the parlor, to-day. She comes to the door, sometimes, to tell me to do something, or go about an errand; but she only does that in a whisper, so you can't see her, Mr. Gowdy, I am quite sure."

"Oh, bless you," cried Jack, "I don't want to see her. Just let these things sit here, that is all I want."

So they were deposited about the floor, and in the windows, and the driver went his way.

On Wednesday, Mr. Enoch Bloodstone called, but Helen had already discovered the effect of that gentleman's presence upon her mother; so she, with a boldness not usual to her, told him that in her mother's present condition, she could see no one except the physician, and asked him not to come again until there should be an improvement in her health.

Matilda remained in about the same condition during the week, contented and well enough so long as her daughter was actually in her immediate presence. Helen had no remembrance of the subject of her father's absence, being again

mentioned after the first time on Tuesday morning. But at last the tedious days and dreary nights of the week had nearly lapsed out of the way, and Saturday morning came. Matilda awoke, much improved; she was even cheerful. She called her daughter to her from the window, and embraced her smilingly.

"This is the day we are to have the letter from papa, is it not, Baby?" she asked.

"Yes, dear mother," said Helen, trying to appear as hopeful as the invalid appeared to be.

She had been expecting the letter daily, since her father had gone away; she had purposely put the time at a considerable distance ahead, in telling her mother when to look for it, fearing the effect of a disappointment. But she had herself suffered grievously in mind, as each day passed and no word was brought from the absent one. She could not understand it, rack her brain as she would. That her father, borne down by the weight of his overwhelming difficulties, should at last yield under the pressure, was not a thing, in itself, to be wondered at. But that he should fail in so obvious a duty as, during his absence, to write to his ailing wife and to his sorrowing, overburdened daughter, to tell even of his whereabouts, was so utterly inconsistent with his character as to be unaccountable. But she had carefully concealed her growing uneasiness from her mother.

"At what hour does the overland coach arrive this afternoon, Baby?"

"About five o'clock is its usual hour of arrival, mamma."

"Then we shall have our letter by six, shall we not?" said the mother, anxiously.

"Yes, mother," answered Helen; but the speech almost died in her throat, when she thought of what might be the consequences of disappointment. Matilda turned her face upon the pillow with composure. She was counting the hours and the minutes that must elapse, before the missive could reach her hands. At six o'clock, almost to a second, she called Helen.

"Has the letter come?"

"Not yet, mamma," and then, to pave the way for a postponement of the time, she continued, — "it may not get here to-day, you know. To-morrow we shall commence to expect it with more confidence."

"It will come to-day, if we have been told the truth about

where he is," said the mother, in a tone so positive, that Helen scarcely dared to interpose so much as a doubt. "If your father's letter does not reach us this evening, it is because that man will not let him write to us."

"Dear mamma, how can he prevent his writing. Papa can write when he pleases to do so. Mr. Bloodstone is in Virginia at this moment, and papa is at Salt Lake City, or on his way thither, and it cannot be in the power of that gentleman to prevent him."

Matilda made no reply to this argument. She seemed not to have heard it. No more was said about the letter till nine o'clock, when the invalid awoke from a short sleep, and sat up in bed. Then, looking about her, as if not quite sure where she was, she inquired again if the letter had come. Helen was obliged to say that it had not.

"But, dear mamma, I am sure that it will come to-morrow evening. Do believe your Baby, this time, and wait patiently just one day more ; I am sure you will not be asked to wait longer."

"Will it please you, Baby ?" asked her mother, kissing her child, and lovingly stroking her golden hair.

"Yes, dear mamma ; it will please me to see you cheerfully waiting, for I am sure it will come."

Matilda drew her daughter closer to her breast, as though, instead of a lady taller than herself, she still held in her arms the tender infant that lady had once been.

"I will wait one more day, Baby, to please you. But if I do not then hear from him, I must not stay here longer, darling ; I must go and search for him."

Helen felt a sensation of fear creeping through her heart at this remark.

Was her poor mother again wandering in her mind ?

"Stay by my side, closely," continued the mother, rocking backward and forward, with her daughter's face upon her breast ; "and mamma will keep the wicked man from coming and taking her Baby down into the dark mine."

"Lie down, dear mamma," cried the now terrified daughter. "Your Baby will stay with you ; lie down and go to sleep."

Matilda obeyed without a murmur, and laid her head upon the pillow, still holding her daughter's hand. Helen managed to slip to the door, and send Charley Hunter, who, as usual, was faithfully at his post, in search of the doctor. But when he came, he saw no cause for alarm. The patient was resting

composedly, and if not in a slumber, was at least too quiet to render it desirable to disturb her with any sort of treatment.

Helen did not leave her mother's side for a moment, during the night, but sat erect, or rested her head upon the side of the bed. In the morning, the invalid again awoke, apparently much refreshed by her night's rest. The doctor called, and found her visibly improved. Helen hoped for the best, but dreaded the night and the non-arrival of the expected letter. All day Matilda lay with her head upon the pillow, conversing at times cheerfully, but the letter was not mentioned, nor was the absence of Mr. Graham hinted at. As night approached, the daughter thought she could see a look of occasional wildness come over her mother's face. It was as if the chord of anxiety was being drawn too tightly. When the watchful daughter would observe this, a thrill of terror would rush through her system; but soon she would see the alarming symptoms pass away, as she thought, and the invalid would again look more cheerful.

So passed the day quite down to six o'clock, the moment most dreaded by Helen, and now to her surprise the expected letter was not inquired for.

The daughter breathed more freely. "My mother has forgotten it," she thought, "and the night will pass over without the frightful business being referred to."

And so it did appear to be doing, for nine o'clock came and went, and then ten, and then eleven o'clock, and at last midnight and after midnight, and still no allusion was made to the subject so close to the minds of both.

The hotel and the town were now slumbering the long night sleep of the weary toiler, and the air was free from disturbing sounds. The light was turned down low in No. 16. Helen patiently sat at her mother's bed-side, holding her hand.

Matilda had slept, or rather dozed, almost continuously since six o'clock in the evening, and her daughter was full of hope for an improvement in her health on the morrow. She heard with joy the clock in the parlor strike two, for it showed the night to be waning. Just as the sound died away, she was startled by her mother suddenly sitting up in bed and looking wildly about her. Seeing her daughter by her side, she said, "Help me up, Baby, I must go; I have waited too long, I shall be late."

"Go whither, mamma?" asked Helen, frozen with terror.

"I must go to the mine. I must go and fetch your father

away. There is no one to go for him except his wife. If she forgets him, he will never come back to us. That man will keep him for ever."

Helen stood up and tried to think what to do. She started to the parlor to ring or send for help.

"Don't leave me, don't leave me a moment," almost shrieked the invalid, reaching out wildly to catch hold of her daughter and detain her. "If you go outside the door he will take you to the mine. You, my precious Baby, my treasure, my life; and your poor mother will lose you as she has lost your father. That man stands without the door at this moment waiting to seize you. Come to me quickly."

This was said with such a burst of frenzy, that Helen flew to her mother's bed-side and was instantly clasped in her arms. This seemed to calm her for a time. The slaughterer had been kept from his prey for at least the present.

"Lie still, darling," moaned the mother, "mamma will protect her pet."

So she sat rocking her child upon her breast for ten minutes, at times singing to her, while poor Helen's heart was bursting with grief and alarm. At last the mother ceased rocking, and let her daughter sit up.

"Now I must go to the mine, Baby," she said again, "and help your father to come out; but you must not leave the room while I am away. Will you, precious Baby?"

"Oh, darling mother," cried Helen, with the purpose of humoring her mother's strange conceit, "do not leave your Baby to-night when it is so dark. Can you not go to-morrow as well?"

"No, mamma will not be here to-morrow. She must go to-night or she can never go. Your mamma ought to have gone the day that man took papa into the mine. But she did not know it then. She did not know till to-night that he was in the mine. Now she does know it, and she must get up and go and help him to come out of the horrid dark place. There is no one to go and bring him away, but his wife who has always loved him, and gone with him in her heart whithersoever he has gone. If she does not help him, he will perish in the mine where the wicked men have kept him."

Here she made an effort to rise, holding to her terrified daughter's shoulder to assist herself.

Helen knew not what to do. She did not dare to restrain her mother, and could not leave her, even for a moment, to call

help without incurring the danger of throwing her into a still more violent paroxysm. But the invalid's strength soon failed her, and she fell back exhausted upon the bed, moaning most piteously, but clinging to Helen's hand with the tenacity of frenzy.

"Precious Baby," she pleaded, "assist mamma to get up."

Helen laid her cheek against her mother's to reassure her.

"Don't go to-night, dear mamma ; wait till it is light, and then go. Do this to please Baby, will you ?"

Matilda raised up her head and regarded her daughter. This request had touched a chord in the mother's aching heart. This form of prayer coming from her child, had never, in all these years, been refused.

"I can't go to-morrow," she said, raising herself up again and sitting in the bed, and looking wildly at her daughter and at the door, as if to make sure that the slaughterer with his sword was not there. "I must go to-night, or never, my Baby."

She paused a moment, and then, drawing Helen to her breast, and rocking her head back and forward as before, she said, "If mamma will not go down in the mine to-night, will Baby help papa to come out when mamma is away and cannot go to him ?"

Poor Helen was so stricken with terror at her mother's evident delirium, that she could not find words to answer her.

"Will she," repeated Matilda. "Will Baby help papa out of the dark place when mamma is gone away ?"

"Yes, dear mamma," said Helen, almost choking with her tears, "Baby will help papa ; she will have him brought from the mine, and fetch him home again. Indeed she will, dearest ; do not doubt your Baby, she will not forget her father, but will go and help him."

"God bless my precious child," cried the frenzied mother, covering her daughter with kisses, "I was sure that she would do it. Do not fail, my Baby, for poor papa is very unhappy in the mine, and wonders why his darling wife, who has always been so faithful to him, has not come before and taken him away. He always knew that, no matter what the world did to him, his Matilda would not forget him. He has expected every day that she would come and take him out of the dark place. He did not know how ill she has been, or he would not have blamed his poor wife, who has always loved him so much."



Helen still held her cheek against her mother's, and agreed with her in all things.

"Be careful about going out, Baby," continued the mother, still rocking her daughter, "that man must not see you ; you must go out when he is not at the door. Will you, Baby?"

"Yes, mamma."

"And will you go to the mine and help papa to come out?"

"Yes, mamma."

"Then lie still now, and go to sleep, while mamma sings to Baby ;" and the invalid mother, holding her daughter upon her breast in the darkness of night, chanted the nursery songs with which she had so often lulled her infant to sleep years ago, but which time, to her disordered and grief-troubled brain, seemed still upon her.

More than once poor Helen essayed to rise from her place, that she might call assistance if necessary, but her mother clung to her with such frantic energy, that she did not dare to release herself from the loving arms that encircled her. The least movement on the part of the daughter aroused the fears of her mother for her safety.

"Do not go with that man," she screamed, again and again, as Helen would try even to sit up in her chair ; "he will take you down in the mine, in the cold dark mine, and then who is to go and bring back mamma's poor husband, when his wife is gone away from him ; do not forget papa who is in the mine, precious Baby, will you?"

And not till Helen would promise, over and over again, to go in search of him as soon as it was light enough to see, would her fears be soothed down once more, and the mother resume the patient rocking of her child, and sing the plaintive cradle song.

With aching heart, and eyes blinded with tears, the daughter sat on the side of the bed, holding herself so that her mother's fancy might be indulged without a tax upon her feeble strength. She counted each minute that elapsed, praying as she had so often done of late, for the night to pass speedily away. Her mother's fancy was to make her Baby go to sleep, and the daughter thought that by simulating slumber, she might satisfy the loving heart, and that then the invalid would forget her troubles in that rest to which she so patiently urged her child. So she lay listening to the lullaby, that had so often hushed her baby voice and closed her eyes in happier days, waiting for the light to come.

But while she held her face so gently on her mother's bosom, the song ceased, and the invalid raised her daughter's head suddenly up and spoke to her.

"Helen," she said, in a soft but steady whisper, "Have you understood what I have now told you about your father being in the mine?"

"Yes, mamma."

"And that you have promised to bring him away?"

"Yes, dear mamma."

"Are you sure that you will not forget it?"

"Quite sure, darling mamma."

The mother gazed in her daughter's eyes a minute, and then drew her again to her heart and kissed her, and gently stroked her golden hair, as she had always done when hushing her in the cradle.

"You must say your prayers now, and go to sleep. Our Father, which art in heaven, —"

"Our father, which art in heaven," repeated Helen, after her mother, as she had done in the days of her childhood. And so the mother went on to the end, waiting at convenient intervals for Helen to follow in the prayer.

"For thine shall be the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever, Amen."

"Amen," said Helen, trying to keep down the sobs, so that the invalid might not hear them.

"Now take a sweet kiss, Baby, and go to sleep," said the mother, when the prayer was finished, and again the gentle rocking was resumed, and the lullaby went up faintly from her lips, growing each moment lower and more indistinct.

Helen thought that her mother's disordered fancy was reconciled by her promise to go in search of her father, and was sinking into a gentle and refreshing slumber.

Slowly Matilda's head sank back upon her pillow, the soft and loving cheek of her daughter going with it, and touching it as it went. The lullaby ceased as if the child and not the mother was at rest. The mother whispered faintly, "Good-night, precious Baby."

"Good-night, mamma," the daughter answered, and Matilda Graham slept with her golden-haired Baby in her arms.

But it was not that sleep that the nurse so tender, and so anxious, thought it was. The sleep of that gentle, loving nature, was the sleep that knows no waking. The wife and mother, who had poured a flood of sunshine upon the hearts of all who

revolved about her, had set off upon her lonely journey without bidding adieu to the glorious orb of day. She who had illumined the paths of so many, with the pure and sacred light of her love, had herself passed away in the black and gloomy night.

There was a great rushing to and fro in the American Eagle Hotel long after midnight. Fearful screams had been heard coming from No. 16, so long, so heart-rending, that the whole house was turned out of bed to learn the cause of the midnight woe.

Ben Flagg, the burly landlord, followed by his kind-hearted wife, were first to enter the solitary room and to view the touching picture.

Helen Graham had been calling for help, and in her terror she had screamed many times. But aid had been long in coming, and her own efforts to restore her mother to consciousness, had only served to inform her too surely of the great change that had come over the pale and silent form that lay in her arms, already cold in death. Doctor Brierly was in the room almost as soon as any, and announced to the landlady that all was over.

"Come away," she said to Helen, after a little time, taking her gently in her arms to withdraw the living from the dead.

"Not yet," sobbed the stricken daughter. "Oh! not yet, my poor mamma was singing me to sleep only a moment ago. The prayers and good-night have scarcely left her lips. Do not take me away yet."

There were many moist eyes around the death-bed, for all had loved the lady that was gone, and knew well the story of sorrow that had broken the gentle heart that now lay still before them.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

## A FRIEND COMES TO SEE HELEN.

THE sorrow that had come upon the beautiful young lady in No. 16 was soon known, not only in the American Eagle Hotel, but at the Washoe House, and so from hotel to hotel. The sad news spread itself rapidly up and down the sides of Mount Davidson, making its way along the streets and highways, into the public houses, and private houses, as well as the gambling saloons, the whiskey shops, and the Dead-falls; and so with the frequenters of such places, the miners, down into the bowels of the earth under the town. But wherever the story found its way, the sympathy was as universal as the listeners were varied.

The grief-stricken daughter might feel herself a cast away upon the great sea of life. She might think in her wretchedness that there was nothing left for her but to lie down and die, forgotten by all the world. But this was not the fault of the thousands of sympathizing hearts within an area of a mile, who would freely have contributed to her wants from their store, but who did not know in what manner to approach, or bring about the charity. Amongst all the reproaches that may be justly made against the young communities of America, and God knows they are sufficiently numerous, a denial of the claims of sorrowing humanity cannot be placed.

✓ True, these mining populations are drawn together by the attraction of gain. They are composed wholly of wealth-seekers. Into the struggle they throw themselves with a fierceness that makes the contest a veritable civil war; each man fights as men fight who are struggling over a single plank left them in a shipwreck. They make of this war for gold a desperate hand-to-hand struggle, in which, not always, but too often, they forget what is due to religion, to morality, and even to honor. But the prize once obtained is not more highly esteemed than any other. The gold so hardly earned is freely spent, or even given away at charity's call. Though Helen Graham was known to have been abandoned by a bankrupt father, and left probably without the means of procuring food for a single day, yet it is certain that she could have remained in No. 16 for an

indefinite period without herself being informed of her destitute condition. Her orders for necessary goods at any shop in the long street of the town, would have been as promptly filled as if her father, instead of a fugitive, had been at that moment at the mine engaged in hoisting out tons of silver ore each day. The whole town seemed impressed with the sad death of Mrs. Graham, and the sorrow of the lonely daughter. The teamsters ceased cracking their whips, as with vast loads of ore they turned around the corner at the hotel to go down the hills towards the noisy quartz mills, at the foot of the sugar loaf. All the day little knots of men, some in black coats, and more in slouched hats, rough miners, shirts and boots outside their trousers, stood about the street in front of the American Eagle, discussing the melancholy event. They were men who had known the history of Mr. Graham ; his hopes, his losses, and his disappointments, from the early day down to the sad moment when a remorseless fate had driven him to the wall, and his heart-broken wife into the grave. And, as they talked the matter over with bated breath and voice of sympathy for the poor runaway gentleman, they often raised their eyes to gaze upon the window over the balcony, now closely drawn, that showed the spot where still remained so much of misfortune's cruel work. But few in the town could do more than look, and wish, and regret ; for the family had been kept too closely at home since their arrival, by illness and sorrow, to have made many acquaintances. So Helen was allowed to endure her grief alone, as no doubt she preferred to endure it, without great flow of expressed commiseration or condolence from others. All the assistance necessary was freely given by the kind landlord and his wife, full of woman's generous and loving sympathy with all in affliction. The body of the dead lady was laid by the window in the little parlor of No. 16, in the very spot where so often at nightfall she had taken her place to look anxiously down the busy street for her darling husband, as, each time more dejected, he wended his weary way from the mine to his home ; and here sat the golden-haired baby, to whom she had sung the lullaby, that hushed not the infant, but herself, to sleep, still watching sorrowfully by the dead mother, whose nurse she had been. Charley Hunter had a seat in the hall outside the door, where, still faithful, he sat, ready and willing to perform whatever was required of him under the contract of employment with Greathouse. Jack Gowdy was to have gone away with his coach over the mountain on Monday morning, but he

did not do so. He heard of what had happened in No. 16, and said at once, "I don't know of any good I can do the young lady by staying here, but I am sure I can do her none by going away. So I won't go." He put an assistant on the box of his coach, and sent it off on the chances, as he called them, of his being wanted. He did not presume to enter the apartments to ask of the lady what service he could be, but came at intervals of ten minutes noiselessly along the hall, and inquired of Charley Hunter how things went on. Receiving the sentinel's report, he went away again to the street in front of the house, and stood about for ten minutes more, and repeated his call. While making his rounds, he received, and declined many invitations to leave his post and cross the street for refreshments of various sorts. The curious public understood that Jack had some sort of knowledge beyond that generally possessed, as to the condition of affairs in the house of sorrow; and without openly asking him to reveal all that he knew, they were profuse in their invitations to drink, upon pretexts as various as were the mixtures offered to him. He was pressed to take a cocktail to remove certain cobwebs that were supposed in some manner to have fixed themselves in his throat. Brandy-smashers, hot brandys, brandy and ice, and brandy and water were recommended and offered in view of his evident coldness; as were whiskey sour, whiskey juleps, whiskey cobblers, Bourbon whiskey, Irish whiskey, and Scotch whiskey, owing to the flushed appearance produced by the warm weather. Reasons of the most conclusive character were produced for his partaking of gin cocktails, gin slings, gin punches, gin and bitters, and gin straight; and no less ingenious reasons were brought into service to show the benefit to be derived from drinking various preparations of rum, of absynth, of ale, of cider, and wine. But Jack turned a deaf ear alike to all these tempting offers; he was on duty, and at such times had always found that his "fine cut" was the only solace that could be safely indulged in; so he declined their invitations to drink. But, remembering the courtesy which should always characterize the intercourse of gentlemen, and not to appear rude or unmannerly, he affably asked, and accepted from them tobacco, and politely renewed his stock from the papers of each. Doctor Brierly's kindness did not cease with the life of his patient, but extended to the duties due to the dead, as well as to the stricken orphan left amongst the living. He consulted with his friends, and a spot was selected for the grave, and all decent preparations were made. The Reverend Mr. Bowring, who had known the lady

in life, was called in to administer the final service for the dead. Mrs. Fogg had not been without assistance in her work of Christian charity, for other ladies there were in the town, who came forward, not officiously, but with gentle decorum, to lend the hand of kindness and woman delicacy, to the last touching duty to the dead. Though Helen had been so much alone these two days that she felt like one in a wilderness, yet when they set forth upon the journey from the little parlor of No. 16, to the still narrower home in the cold side of Mount Davidson, to which her mother was to be removed, she was startled to find that they were followed by a vast concourse of people of all classes, marching in solemn procession. Even the poor miners who spent half their lives in the dark galleries and tunnels below ground, had, in remembrance of the kindness of Mr. Graham, so often shown to them, found their way to the surface, to pay their honest tribute of respect to his dead wife, and sympathy for the sorrowing daughter. The last resting-place of the gentle woman was not one that would have been chosen by herself. She would have been laid beneath the green grass, in some secluded spot beside a purling brook ; she would have had a spreading tree to shade her grave, where birds might sit and chirp, and twitter, keeping time with the babbling waters. She was buried beneath the sand, and loose rocks, and volcanic scoria, that crushes out vegetation, and renders the sides of Mount Davidson so bleak and desolate.

A few acres of desert had been inclosed some months before, and set aside for a resting place for the dead, and hither had been brought all whose hard lot it had been to perish in this far off land.

But in the early days of the little colony, disease had not been so active an instrument in the hands of the grim tyrant as had been violence, and crime, and dissipation. The ground was dank and dripping with the fresh blood of strong men.

The pure and gentle mother was not put to rest side by side with others pure and gentle like herself, but lay as a lily that had fallen in the butcher's shambles pale and spotless.

Gamblers killed in quarrels over cards ; assassins themselves, slain in drunken brawls ; suicides, and robbers, slaughtered in felonious acts, were to be the companions of the gentle and pure woman, whose heart had been broken by violence that to it was as deadly as the bludgeon stroke, the knife thrust, or the pistol bullet, that had laid them low.

The minister read his homilies and his collects for the dead. Then they laid her down and covered her with stones and scoria,

that rattled upon her coffin, with savage glee, as if rejoicing in the beautiful prize that had fallen to them. And then they went away and left her.

In the evening, Helen found herself alone in No. 16. Not even the body of her dead mother was there to protect her, with its pale and silent influence. Doctor Brierly, who had come home with her, left her at her door, and went at once to good Mrs. Fogg, to ask her to come and sit in the room with the young lady. But he met her in the hall already on her way thither.

"Oh, I could not think of leaving her alone a moment, poor child!" cried the kind landlady, "I am going directly to comfort her, as well as I can." But she could not spend all of her time with poor Helen, much as she would have liked to do it, but would be called away at almost every moment, by the duties in the house, and intending always to be back in half a minute, but was detained generally twenty times as long. The young lady, however, did not feel the want of Mrs. Fogg's company; she could only sit in her chair and sob, and this was a relief to her burdened heart. The idea that her mother had died in the room, and had lain there a corpse for two days, did not render the place revolting, or even gloomy, to Helen's mind. It had been her loving mother who had passed away in the apartments, and nothing relating to that gentle spirit could inspire gloom or dread in the daughter. But it was the sense of loneliness and desolation that crowded upon and overwhelmed the orphan. Not only had her poor mother died heart-broken, but her father was a fugitive, at the least. What worse state he might be in she scarcely dared to contemplate. The last words of her mother, the singular charge she had impressed upon her daughter, when apparently in the frenzy of dissolution, to fail not to go to the mine and relieve her father, had made a deep impression upon Helen. So much had she thought of it, now that her mother was gone, that a notion that she had spoken from a sort of preternatural inspiration was steadily taking possession of her mind. During the two days the body had lain by the window in the parlor, awaiting burial, each time Helen had looked in the dead face, it had seemed to have the same beseeching, anxious expression that had come upon it in life, when her mother, in the dark night of her death, had drawn her Baby to her breast and made her renew the pledge not to forget to go and help her father to come out of the mine. And as the cold features settled and shrunk away each hour, the daughter was sure the beseeching look grew and



intensified, until at last it was graven upon her heart that her dead mother still spoke to her, even in nursery language and reminded her that there was now no one left but her precious Baby to help poor papa to come out of the mine, since mamma was gone away. Helen sat in her chair alone, invoking the memory of her mother, at times bursting into fresh fits of sobbing, as some new view of her grief would strike her already depressed and broken spirit. Mrs. Fogg had been in the room as much as she possibly could be ; indeed the poor woman thought she had been there all the time, since the young lady had returned from the funeral, with only momentary exceptions. But her detentions had been greater in the affairs of the house than she believed, and Helen had in fact been alone, chiefly throughout the evening. She had yielded to her loneliness and dejection, and had thrown herself upon the sofa in utter despondency, and lay there moaning and calling, with childish abandonment to sorrow, upon her dear mamma to pity her poor Baby, and come and take her away with her.

While she lay there convulsively sobbing, as if her heart would melt with tears and pour out at her eyes, she heard, as she thought, Mrs. Fogg enter the room once more and approach the sofa upon which she lay. In another moment she felt a warm cheek laid against hers, and felt that some woman was embracing her, and, drawing her lovingly to her breast, she opened her eyes and looked. It was Blanche McIver who had entered her room, and, without speaking, had taken the sufferer to her heart, and was drying her tears, and kissing the cheek that she had thought abandoned by all the world. She could not speak, but her dry and heated eyes, that before had seemed to be burning in her head, were instantly cooled by a burst of fresh and limpid tears, that rose now voluntarily from a fountain that had appeared, but a moment before, dry and exhausted.

The sufferer no longer made any effort to bear up under her grief. There was no need for her to struggle or strive to sustain herself. Her friend, her sister, had come to her, and now she was to be cared for and nursed in her turn. She who had been for weeks bearing upon her shoulders the burden of a load of care and sorrow too much for three people, under which one had fled and another had died, was now relieved ; the succor so long hoped for had at last arrived. Blanche had come, and would bear her grief for her, and the weary one could rest. Had it been Mrs. Fogg that entered the room,

Helen would have merely risen up and sat erect upon the sofa, and at least made an effort to converse and be calm. This she would have done, because her hard task was not yet accomplished, — the journey not ended. But it was Blanche. It was relief. It was rest. It was consolation, and comfort, and protection, all come at once, and at the moment when she had felt like crying out, that her trial was more than she could bear. So she spoke not, nor essayed to speak. There was no need for her to do so, — she was safe ; her trials were over ; her protection secured. So she lay in her friend's arms, sobbing upon the breast that had come so far to fetch sympathy and consolation.

"I came as soon as I heard about it, Baby," cried Blanche. "The telegram reached me at three o'clock, and I was on the steamer at four. I have come all alone, bringing only my carpet-bag. A half-dozen gentlemen would have come with me, but they could not get ready. They say women are slow to dress, and always keep people waiting ; but if I had waited for the gentlemen who promised to come with me, I should not have been here till to-morrow night."

"Oh ! thank you, Blanche," sobbed Helen, finding words at last. "I should not have lived that long without you, I should have died and gone away with poor mamma before that time."

"Well, I am here, Baby !" and Blanche kissed her friend, and patted her cheek ; "and now you shall be taken care of, and nursed as tenderly as my poor, little, darling Baby should be nursed. Your troubles will soon be over."

"Why, I have come up to take you away with me, Baby," cried Blanche.

Helen shook her head. "That is impossible, dear Blanche ; I cannot leave this spot till I have fulfilled my solemn obligation to my mamma that is in the grave. It may have been and probably was a fancy of hers, — a mere illusion originating in her poor disordered brain, as she lay here day after day dying of a broken heart, produced by the absence of my father, whom she loved better than life itself. But, whatever it may have been, dear Blanche, with my head upon her breast as she nursed me when a baby, she asked me for that promise, and when I had given it, she sang the cradle-song by which she has lulled me to sleep a thousand times, not even forgetting to say with me 'Our Father,' and then kissed me in gratitude and died. I am a poor, weak girl, scarcely knowing whither to turn to for help or for advice ; but I will stay here in Virginia, if I am

obliged to work in this Hotel as a domestic servant for my food, I will do anything that is not wicked; but I will discharge my promise to my poor mother before I leave it. If I die in the effort they shall lay me by her side; for not otherwise would I feel that I could sleep next to my darling mother even in the grave." This said, she fell sobbing, quite overcome upon the breast of her friend.

"You shall do as you wish, Baby," cried Blanche, "and you shall not work as a servant in doing it either. I came to fetch you away, it is true, but such being your feelings whether they are correct or not, it would be wrong for me to urge you to lay them aside. I shall not do so, but will rather encourage you to persevere. I cannot say that your mother was right in her notion, for I do not think so. But strange things have occurred in this wicked world, and they may have in this instance. In any case you would not be happy if you did not satisfy yourself about the matter by actual demonstration. You shall stay here, Helen, as long as you wish. I cannot be with you all of the time, but I will stay as long and as much as I can, and as your sister I will stand by and protect you to the last, whether I am present or not."

Helen could only embrace her friend, and thank her with tears and blessings.

"Now let us go to bed"; and the two young girls retired for the night to Helen's room, which they occupied together.



## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### A WORTHY MEMBER OF THE WASHOE BAR.

THE story of the flight of Mr. Graham reached Harry Stacey's ears in the regular course of events. Such a delicate bit of scandal found its way naturally into the Washoe journals, and was copied throughout the country. He was shocked and saddened by the unfortunate termination of his client's career, but was not very greatly surprised. Mr. Graham, though employing the young man in defending the suits pending against

the mine, had never given him any knowledge of his financial affairs. Harry knew, however, without being told, that his notable ill success in searching for the silver vein must have long since brought the proprietor to great straits. When he therefore heard of the gentleman's flight, he soon reconciled the strange proceeding with probability, as all others had done. It had been the resort of a sensitive nature to avoid facing a difficulty that was no longer surmountable. "He could not satisfy his creditors," thought Harry, "and he has not had the fortitude to face them and tell them so." Mr. Graham's conduct had placed Harry in not only a delicate, but in an exceedingly difficult position.

✓ The claim of the Bosh Mining Company, though utterly without foundation in either law or justice, might, by the defendant's extraordinary absence, become formidable. The suit had now advanced to that stage where it required the utmost watchfulness. The demurrers and dilatory motions had been disposed of, and there remained nothing save the issues of fact. In short, the suit was ready for trial and might be called at any term of the court. To make matters worse a regular term was about to commence, and it lay in the power of the plaintiffs to force it on within three or four weeks, should they deem it advisable to do so. There was not the least probability that the conspirators would willingly come to trial under ordinary circumstances. But this last complication was so strange that the young man scarcely knew what to look for. He very soon resolved, however, not to be found asleep at his post. "I will do the best I can," he thought, "and act as if I expected no favors from the enemy."

Mr. Graham being away, Harry found it his duty to communicate with his superintendent, Mr. Bloodstone. He did this most reluctantly, for the fact that that gentleman was to be the future husband of Helen burnt deeply into the young man's soul. "He will at least not know that I ever aspired to her hand," thought Harry, "for I am sure she has never told him that circumstance." He would fain have avoided the interview had it been possible, but it was not. So he made his way in the direction of Mr. Graham's office, turning over in his mind what would be his probable reception. "If he suspects my feelings toward his intended wife he will not receive me very pleasantly, but I cannot help that. His jealousy must not prevent my doing my duty."

At the office Harry found two gentlemen, one was Mr. Enoch Bloodstone, the superintendent ; the other was introduced to him by that gentleman as Mr. Marvin Withergreen, President of the Pactolus Mine. The two gentlemen, so Mr. Bloodstone said, had just been engaged in talking over the unfortunate turn of fate that had befallen their mutual friend, Mr. Graham, and his amiable family. They both expressed their sorrow at what had occurred, and with great difficulty could restrain their tears in speaking of it. In truth the two gentlemen, if their own stories could be believed, had more than once found themselves involuntarily weeping when the sad subject had been suggested to their sympathetic minds.

Harry was glad to find that the unfortunate family still had a place in the hearts of those who had known them. His business in the Territory was in behalf of Mr. Graham's interests, and he would need all the assistance that gentleman's friends and well-wishers could extend to him.

Mr. Bloodstone inquired of him the nature of his business.

He had come to defend the title of Mr. Graham to the mine against the claim of the Bosh Company.

"Indeed," cried the superintendent, "is that suit to be brought to trial ? I thought it was to be dismissed on motion of the plaintiffs."

"It has not been dismissed," said the lawyer, "and may be brought to trial at the term of court now almost upon us."

Mr. Withergreen inquired the nature of the suit.

Harry explained it to him. And when he had finished Mr. Withergreen said, —

"There is just such another pending against my mine, the Pactolus ; but I do not pay any attention to it, sir. They dare not bring it on."

"That may be, Mr. Withergreen, because you are prepared to meet the trial whenever it shall come. I only fear their taking advantage of our unfortunate position, and forcing it on when we are not ready."

Both Mr. Withergreen and the superintendent shrugged their shoulders with contempt.

"Impossible," cried the President of the Pactolus. "Why should they want the mine ? It will be time enough for them to stir when you find the vein. Nobody wants a mine that is filled with water at the bottom and choke-damps at the top, so that they could not get into it if they tried. My word for it,

sir, they don't intend to throw any money down Mr. Graham's shaft. Too much has gone down there already."

This was also the opinion of Mr. Bloodstone.

"Still," cried Harry, "Mr. Graham's friends owe it to that gentleman not to permit his rights to be jeopardized by any default of theirs."

Here Mr. Bloodstone showed his teeth. He thought that some other people had a sufficient interest in the mine not to allow it to be lost, besides Mr. Graham. He, Mr. Bloodstone, had pitched a good many thousands of very hard dollars down that hole, and he did not intend to let anybody get in there and pick them up if he could help it.

"In that you are quite right, Mr. Bloodstone," said Harry, affecting not to see the changed manner. "But to successfully defend the most contemptible suit you must be prepared. Have you taken any steps to protect your interests, sir? have you employed counsel?"

Mr. Bloodstone had not, he answered doggedly. He had never seen the necessity of it, and did not think there was any need of acting in a hurry. He would now go to his lawyer, however, he said, and attend to the business.

Harry thanked him.

As the interests of Mr. Bloodstone and Mr. Graham towards the Bosh Company's claim were identical, he should be most happy to co-operate with Mr. Bloodstone's counsel.

"Will you arrange for an interview with him as soon as possible? For my sole business in the Territory is to attend to this matter."

Mr. Bloodstone promised to do so at once, and Harry bade the gentleman "good morning," and returned to the American Eagle Hotel.

The young man found himself, upon reflection, more sorely perplexed than before. The interview had not been at all to his satisfaction. The whole manner of the man had been to him suggestive of deception and concealment; yet he could conceive of no cause for any such conduct.

"If he had been less polite," thought Harry, "I might have put down his conduct to his dislike for me. I might have suspected that Helen had confided to him my secret. But no, that is impossible. She never would have done it; and, besides, an honest man, only jealous, would have simply turned me out of the door and refused to talk with me about the business. He would not have condescended to cheat me,

to deceive, or throw me off my guard. He would have said, 'I have my own counsel, and you can go about your business.' He handled me altogether too gingerly," thought Harry, "he does not hate me, he only fears me. Why should he fear me? I can't conceive, but we will wait and see."

The young lawyer was gradually getting sharpened up to the edge necessary to cut his way through the frauds of a corrupt community; but he had not got to the ground of fathoming all the depths to which human depravity can descend. He could not conceive of Mr Bloodstone's discovery and concealment of the vein in the mine of his employer, nor of the monstrous consequences that had been formed to appropriate it. The complicity of Mr. Withergreen in the fraud, if suggested, would have been at once dismissed to its proper place in the drawer of some writer of sensational romances.

Again, the young man, from his newness to the country, was ignorant of much that was going on about him. He did not even know that such a mine as the Pactolus existed; and, especially, he did not dream that the stock was at that moment selling in the market readily at two thousand five hundred dollars a share, a sum which, to be justified, would make the mine the most valuable one upon the entire Comstock Lode. Had he even been told of it, he could never have suspected the cause that had operated to put it up to such a fabulous price.

He could not have known, what was the truth, that Withergreen and Bloodstone, in despair of depressing the stock by their "bearing" operations, had, more than a month before, gone into the market and invested their entire fortunes in the shares of the Pactolus, in the vain hope of obtaining a controlling interest, at any price, and had failed signally.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### HELEN GRAHAM CONSULTS A LAWYER.

IN the evening Harry received a message from Miss Graham. It was brought by Charley Hunter. He had been sitting in his room a half-hour trying to determine the question in his own mind, whether he ought to call upon that lady again without an express command to that effect. At the moment when he had persuaded himself that he ought to do so in spite of the circumstance that she was engaged to be married to Mr. Bloodstone, the door opened and Charley entered.

Miss Graham wished to see Mr. Stacey at No. 16, at as early a moment as would be convenient for him to call.

Harry thanked the boy, and said he would proceed immediately to Miss Graham's apartments.

He found her alone, Blanche McIver having retired with a slight indisposition, the effects of her recent journey over the mountains. It was the first time Harry had seen her alone since the memorable day when she had dismissed him in despair. He was quite sure that he had never seen her look so beautiful as she was in her suit of black. She asked him, kindly, to be seated in a chair near to where she sat.

"I have sent for you, Mr. Stacey," she said in a sad tone, "to consult you, professionally, upon a matter that weighs heavily upon me."

Harry assumed an attentive attitude, and begged her to proceed.

"The affair is a most delicate one," she said, "in view of all the circumstances, and I communicate it to you, in confidence, the more readily as you already know more of my situation than any one that I have now about me. You are aware, Mr. Stacey," and here her voice sank even lower than before, "that I have promised to marry Mr. Enoch Bloodstone."

Harry acknowledged the fact by an inclination of the head.

"I have told no one now living of the circumstance, except yourself and my father."

Harry assured her that she could depend upon his discretion in all things, and she continued, —

"My father's disappearance was most extraordinary and unaccountable. He went out of the house on Sunday afternoon to go, as he said, to the mine. We only know, as a matter of certainty, that he never returned. We heard that he had fled from the country to avoid his embarrassments. Had that been the fact, we ought, reasonably, to have received letters from him in no great length of time afterwards. But he has never written to us, — not once. The anxiety and uncertainty about his fate was the immediate cause of my poor mother's death."

Here the lady's firmness gave way and she sobbed in her handkerchief for a moment, and then went on, but in a broken voice.

"Before she died," — here she looked hard at Harry, as if to watch the effect of her words upon him, — "especially the night of her death, she either knew or fancied that she knew, in some



mysterious manner, where my father was. And, acting upon that knowledge, or illusion, as the case may have been, she exacted from me a pledge, — more, Mr. Stacey, she laid upon me, her daughter, a solemn duty not to rest till I had gone to him and brought him home, — released him, indeed, from the place where she believed or imagined him to be kept.”

Harry had listened to each word with strict attention.

“Then your mother believed, or knew, as you say, that your father was detained, unwillingly; that he was held under duress of some sort?”

“Yes, Mr. Stacey, that was precisely her notion, and she has put such a charge upon me that I feel it my duty to do as she wished me at all hazards. I have sent for you, Mr. Stacey, not to consult you about the reason of my mother’s whim, its value, or authority with prudent people; not to ask you whether I ought to make an effort to perform my mother’s dying request, for upon that I wish no advice. My mind is clear. I shall do all that in a feeble woman lies to redeem my promise made in the arms of my poor mother before she died. I have sent for you, Mr. Stacey, as an honest and loyal gentleman, a friend of my dead mother and my father, and I trust of myself, to consult with you upon the method to be pursued in following my mother’s wishes. I wish to ask you how I am to do it.”

“I understand you fully, Miss Graham. Your mother, on her dying bed, fancied that your father was somewhere in detention against his will. Having no one else about her at the moment she laid upon you the obligation of his rescue. She being dead, that pledge binds your conscience, if it does not really satisfy your reason. But, having resolved to do as you have been enjoined to do, you wish only to have the means pointed out, unaccompanied by any reasons or arguments tending to show any supposed fallacy in your mother’s notions.”

“Yes, Mr. Stacey, that is precisely what I wished to say.”

Harry reflected a moment. “Why does she not go to Bloodstone?” he thought; then he said in an earnest and kindly tone, —

“I am at your service, Miss Graham. Where did your mother tell you to search for your father?”

She looked at him as if still in doubt whether she could communicate to him the fantastic notions of her poor mother, then she answered, —

“Down in his own mine, Mr. Stacey.”

Harry started, and looked for a moment as if he doubted the evidence of his senses.

✓ "In the Graham mine!" he said, slowly.

"In the Graham mine, Mr. Stacey."

"Did she fancy—did she understand, I should say,—Miss Graham, that he was still living, or that he had perished in the mine, and that only his body was there?"

"She understood that he was then in the mine, and living."

"Was your mother aware of the mephitic gases that had so long filled the mine?"

But seeing her look at him in a reproachful manner, he remembered his promise and apologized.

"I forgot myself, Miss Graham; I promised not to offer any obstruction to your course. I will try not to offend again. Is our discussion to be restricted with respect to the possible reasons for his detention in the mine, and, especially, are we free to discuss who it may be who holds your father in this unlawful imprisonment?"

"I am quite incapable, Mr. Stacey, of throwing any light upon these questions. If he is detained there as my mother fancied him to be, I know not why. She gave me no intimation upon that point. As for the persons who detained him, she said but little. She thought he was kept by an individual whom she designated as 'that man.' She gave no other hint."

"Have you any notion, Miss Graham, who was meant by your mother, when she spoke of 'that man'?"

Helen hesitated.

"Yes," she said, "I have reason to think that I know who was in my mother's mind."

"Would you object to telling me that much?"

"Is it necessary, Mr. Stacey? for I will say this, that I throw myself wholly upon your generosity. I will tell anything that you think is necessary or even beneficial in the matter."

"It is true, Miss Graham, that I might presume without being told, that if your father was detained in the mine, that his imprisonment would naturally be the work of the one in authority there. Yet it would, perhaps, not be too much to ask of you who you understand to be the wrong-doer in the case. But in asking the question, I will say to you that I pledge whatever honor there is in my heart not to divulge, unnecessarily, or to use, otherwise than in the investigation, any information you may give me."

"I am content, Mr. Stacey. The person referred to by my mother was Mr. Bloodstone."

Observing that Harry remained silent, she continued,—

"You are not to understand that because I give the name of the gentleman to whom I have promised my hand in marriage, that I know of any special motives that he may have for my father's detention, or that I have any reasons beyond my mother's declaration for thinking him guilty. I have no fixed belief in the subject. I am acting upon no conviction, no opinion. I have promised my mother to do a certain act, and if it is in my power, if my life shall be spared to me, I will do it. Can you assist me, Mr. Stacey?"

Harry did not answer her question directly. He said, —

"I suppose, Miss Graham, that your pledge would be redeemed by a thorough and careful examination of the mine made by competent persons, though your father was not found to be detained there."

"I cannot undertake now to say what I would consider a performance of my promise, Mr. Stacey. I prefer not to lay down any special boundary within which I am to act. I wish to do my duty; but I admit that the limit of that duty has a special standard within my own conscience. The assurance of no living creature that I had done all, would satisfy me, unless my own heart told me also that I exhausted all the means within my reach. I wish to go on, leaving my own judgment uninfluenced by others to dictate to me how perfect has been the search, how faithful my efforts. I would rather you would leave that wholly to myself, as you have already promised to do, with respect to the reason for my attempting to obey the last wishes of my mother."

"I am willing to do so, Miss Graham; your father has strong claims upon me for the confidence he placed in me when here. Your mother's wishes are to me like the wishes of my own mother; for she certainly took an interest in me, that would have been most gratifying, if I had been her son. I am sure I loved her as a mother. I will do the best I can, Miss Graham; I know of no plan except the legal one of proceeding by the writ of *habeas corpus*. I will, however, before acting, make an attempt to visit the mine, by ordinary means. Not that I consider that anything will be gained by it, for it is quite improbable that such an attempt will result otherwise than in failure. It is said that the mine is filled with gases destructive to human life. If this story be true, we will be kept out of the mine by natural causes. If it be false, then the men who have given currency to the story, are interested in keeping away any visitors, and will not hesitate to do so against any

ordinary influences. In the end, therefore, we shall be obliged to invoke the power of the law. In such case, the names of the parties whom we believe, or imagine, to be doing the unlawful act, must necessarily be disclosed, and the affair made public. Are you willing to submit to this scandal, Miss Graham?"

✓ "I am, if it be necessary to do so, in order to obey my mother's commands," she answered, in a steady voice. "I am willing to do anything, to submit to anything, that lies in the line of the performance of what I consider a duty. Beyond that, I do not suppose you will ask me to go."

"No," he answered, "I shall try not to do so."

"The very nature of my action," she continued, "is based upon the possibility that my future husband has been guilty of a crime. Such being the fact, it would be idle to take him into the secret of my intentions. If he prove innocent, I shall have done him a wrong for which I will gladly make any reparation in my power. I have thought of all this. I understand the apparent absurdity of it all. I have a notion how it must seem to you; to men, judged by the standard of men's reason, and understanding; how it appears when viewed in this light. I have discarded reason entirely in the matter, and am following an impulse, a blind impulse, if you please to so call it, but one as strong as any strength so feeble a woman as I am can possess. I would prefer to obey my mother without offending any one, without wounding the feelings of any one, especially a man who holds my solemn promise to become his wife; but, if I am to live longer upon this earth, I must not forget the dying words of my broken-hearted mother."

"It is not necessary to say another word to me, concerning your motives, Miss Graham," said Harry, with a burst of enthusiasm that flashed in his eyes, and illuminated his countenance, "I understand you, and will do all in my power to aid you. Do not doubt my zeal; depend fully upon my discretion. I will set about the work this very moment."

Helen could only thank him by a look. She did not dare to trust herself with words, for her tears were already too near the surface to permit of any experiments in language.

"Good-night," said Harry, "I do not know what success I may have in invoking the law in aid of right in Washoe; but if I fail, it shall not be for lack of zeal in the cause."

"Good-night," said the lady, closing the door upon him. Then turning, she threw herself upon her knees, and, with

clasped hands, asked her heavenly Father to "aid in the work so generously commenced."

Harry proceeded immediately to his room, and began, without hesitation, to draw the papers necessary to procure the writ of *habeas corpus*. "I may not be required to use it," he thought, "but I will complete them to-night, because, at this hour, I can do nothing else. To-morrow I may visit the mine, possibly, by the consent of Bloodstone. There are a hundred things I may do ; but, to-night, this alone can be done." And so he plunged his pen into the ink, and then wrote off sheet after sheet of paper, and laid them upon the floor at his side. Before he retired to bed he had prepared all the forms required to invoke in the cause of Mr. Graham the processes of the law for asserting the right of personal liberty.

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## CHAPTER XXXV.

### CONSCIENCE AN OBSTACLE TO JUSTICE.

HARRY STACEY was up at an early hour the following morning. Before any decided line of conduct could be entered upon, it was necessary for him to make a general survey of the field in which he was to operate. By ten o'clock he had ascertained all that could be known by the outside world, with respect to the condition of the Graham mine. As Mr. Graham's attorney, preparing for the trial of the suit pending against the mine, it was only natural and proper for him to visit the premises, and to examine carefully the disputed possessions. Arriving at the hoisting works which covered the mouth of the shaft, he knocked at the door, and found it locked on the inside. This was not a remarkable circumstance. The mine was not being worked, and the hour was early in the morning. It was quite natural to suppose that the watchman would be within, and perhaps still in bed, so Harry repeated his clamor for admission, till at last the door was unlocked from within, and partially opened.

"What do you want," said the watchman, in a gruff voice.

"I would like to come in, if you please," said Harry.

"But I don't please," said the watchman. "If you could read, you might know that it was against the rules. Look at that notice," and the man pointed to the usual warning written over the door, "No admission."

"But I have business," cried Harry, as the man was shutting the door in his face.

"What is it?" said the watchman, stopping and peering through the crack.

"I am Mr. Graham's attorney. I have come about a law-suit against the mine, and I want to examine the place."

At this, the door was opened, and showed Mr. Enoch Bloodstone standing behind the watchman.

"Good-morning, Mr. Stacey," said that gentleman, with an air of forced ease, as Harry thought. "I did not recognize your voice at first. Pray walk in, sir. We do not admit everybody to the works now, as we are not doing anything; but, of course, the rule does not apply to you."

Harry thanked him, and entered the house. It was simply a large wooden building, with closely planked sides, and roof of the same material. In the centre was the shaft that descended to the mine; close by stood the steam engine, used for hoisting the cage up and down; but this was cold, as no work had been done for several weeks; not since the water came into the mines.

"Do you sleep at the mines?" asked Harry of Bloodstone.

"Oh, no sir, I do not; but I am always here at a very early hour; I have been engaged this morning in sounding the water at the bottom of the shaft; I do this every day to see if it increases in depth."

Though Mr. Bloodstone made this statement, Harry saw no line or other instrument that could have been used for that purpose.

"Do you go down the shaft to make your soundings, Mr. Bloodstone?"

"No, certainly not, Mr. Stacey; were you not aware that the mine is filled with damps, so that no one can enter it?"

Harry had heard something of this circumstance, but only by vague rumor. And besides, it might have been purified in the meantime.

"Oh, no, sir," said Mr. Bloodstone, "not at all; it remains as bad as ever; almost every day I let a dog down in the cage, and he comes up nearly suffocated after being down there only

three minutes. We do not put down any light, for fear of an explosion, but the matter is not serious, Mr. Stacey ; if we should ever determine to resume work again, a thing now not very probable, we can soon remove the bad air. On the other hand, if the mine should be abandoned, — and I am now only waiting to hear from Mr. Graham, to determine upon that course, — then, as you will naturally understand, it will be of no consequence what sort of air is at the bottom of the old pit."

Harry walked around the cage, and examined it as well as he could, Mr. Bloodstone following him, and watching him incessantly as he moved. But the young man had never been in a mine before, and all was new to him. He observed nothing extraordinary about the place. Indeed, he was too ignorant of such matters to have been able to judge, had there been anything out of the way. But he thought that he could see in the conduct of Mr. Bloodstone something like anxiety. His face, Harry thought, was unusually pale, even for that gentleman's always cadaverous complexion. "Can it be," thought the young man, "that my own suspicions mislead me? The hour is early, and Mr. Bloodstone has not yet broken his fast. That which I take for the trepidation of conscious guilt, may be only the result of a casual annoyance upon an irritable temperament ; the man is hungry and I am detaining him." But another circumstance attracted the notice of the young lawyer. There were, when he entered, four men in the place, besides the watchman and the superintendent. Six men were, at this early hour, already for some purpose in the hoisting works of a mine, not being operated, and in fact about to be abandoned, and the door was locked. Had they all slept there, it would not have appeared so remarkable. But one of them, at least, had come from his bed in another part of the town. None of these men spoke to Harry, except the superintendent. But they all stood around him, or dogged him about, so the young man thought, in a manner evincing more than ordinary interest in his movements. It was apparent to Harry that nothing could be gained in this way. If Mr. Graham was at the bottom of the mine, these men were his custodians, and nothing could be done save by some force that could wholly overcome them.

"I called up to take a look about the place, Mr. Bloodstone, so as to have some notion what it was like. That is all, sir. At the trial I shall have to ask many questions about the mine, and feel the necessity of knowing a little about it."

Mr. Bloodstone said, "that the desire was only natural."

"But I don't think I have made much progress," continued Harry with an air of gaiety, "I do not think I know enough about mines yet, to judge of what is at the bottom by a look at the outside."

"Few men ever get to that point of knowledge, Mr. Stacey. No man can tell what is under ground by looking at the surface."

"I suppose not, sir, but they often act as if they did know."

"Yes," cried Mr. Bloodstone with a laugh, "in buying 'Wild-cat' shares, I suppose you mean."

Harry did not say what he meant. "He might call again, at some more convenient hour," he said. "At present, he felt that he was detaining Mr. Bloodstone from his breakfast, and would take his leave."

Mr. Bloodstone bade him "Good morning," and closed the door behind him.

Harry felt that the case was growing more difficult of solution. It was clear the mine could not be visited. To offer to enter it was to face death, either from noxious air below ground, or by the hand of still more vicious men above.

Whatever the facts might be, it was not intended by Bloodstone and his creatures that anybody should go down the mine.

Harry felt, for the first time, the extent of his own weakness, as against the forces opposed to him. He determined to seek assistance and advice. "I do not know the customs of this country sufficiently well, to make my way single-handed against these men."

Before leaving San Francisco this time, he had taken the precaution to provide himself with letters of introduction to some of the gentlemen of the legal profession in Virginia, who were known to be lawyers of integrity and proved honor. For it must not be understood, that in Washoe, all of the lawyers were made up of men of the class who had caused Harry to play the rôle of a returned Union soldier on the occasion of his first visit to the Territory.

Indeed, there, as everywhere, even in the worst state of society, there was scope and room in the profession for men of honor and principle. And though, at times, it might appear that the quickest road to wealth and distinction, lay by the short cut through which Napoleon B. Spelter and his satellites were driving with such speed, yet, in the end, it will no doubt prove, indeed it already has proven, that those gentlemen who



remained true to the obligations of honor, of truth and justice,—obligations resting most heavily upon the shoulders of lawyers, because of the influence they wield in society,—have been the most successful, and are the most honored and renowned. Such were General Williams, Mr. Covington, Judge Burden, Mr. Mason, and Mr. Wright; Mr. Stewart, also, must not be forgotten, as well as many others.

Harry presented his letter to the first of the above named gentlemen. General Williams was a gentleman advanced in years, who had through life borne a high reputation for legal ability, as well as for honor and integrity.

“I am glad to see you, Mr. Stacey,” said General Williams, after reading his letter. “Can I be of any service to you while here?”

Harry thanked the General for the kind inquiry, and asked for a private interview upon a matter of importance.

“This way,” said the General, politely; and they walked into his private office. Here, when they were seated, Harry explained to the General the matter upon his mind, impressing him with its strictly secret nature. Having gone over the ground as completely as it was in his power to do, he asked for the advice of the veteran.

General Williams put many questions to Harry, tending to draw out any concealed or forgotten facts, that might disclose a motive for the imprisonment of Mr. Graham. But, becoming satisfied at last that the young man had told him all that he himself knew, and that no more was to be found out, he deliberated a moment, and then spoke.

“There is nothing intrinsically improbable in the theory of the young lady, that her father is detained in the mine. Much more high-handed proceedings are carried on every day in our midst. As for there being no motive for the crime, that may be simply the result of our imperfect knowledge of the facts. If we knew the entire relationship between Mr. Graham and the superintendent, or between the superintendent and Mr. Graham’s family, which we cannot know, the ground might prove to be bristling with motives for even his death. That is no objection whatever. The weakness of the theory lies purely in the circumstance which has brought it into existence. First, it is reported, and apparently proven, that Mr. Graham has voluntarily either absconded himself, or fled from the country. For his doing this, it appears, there was some motive, though even that does not strike you or me as being a very

forcible one. But you and I are lawyers, and know that the escape of the debtor from his obligations in this country is easy, and in a community made up of debtors, not attended with any considerable degree of humiliation. Mr. Graham was not a lawyer, and may not have studied clearly the difference between a gambling, risk-taking community of adventurers, always in debt and trouble, and an older and more stable society, like that in which he had been reared and educated. We have thus a probable case in favor of the theory of voluntary concealment or flight. What have we against it? Have we any facts, besides the sick-bed fancy, or the hallucination of a lady, confessedly dying from the shock produced by her husband's disappearance? I see nothing else. The circumstance that he has not written to his family, would, if accompanied by other collateral and supporting facts, be worth something; but alone, it does not go for much. My judgment therefore is, Mr. Stacey, that no case is made out against the managers of the mine, and that by waiting a few days longer, you will no doubt hear of the fugitive, from some place of safety; perhaps in the Atlantic States, whither he is unquestionably making his way, at this moment."

Harry had not told General Williams of his desire to search the mine in any case, for the purpose of relieving the conscience of Mr. Graham's daughter. He now did so.

The General looked grave. "That is a matter worthy of consideration, Mr. Stacey. As I said before, there is nothing inherently improbable, in the lady's notion of the cause of her father's absence. I do not pass a day in this Territory without hearing of some act, committed by the managers of mines, that do not require for their performance any greater degree of moral depravity than this,—nor, indeed, much more boldness, for that matter. I only doubt the story, simply because it comes to me from so questionable a source as the disordered brain of a dying woman; and comes with no supporting circumstances. But if the young lady feels a moral, a filial duty, pressing upon her to investigate this theory, she undoubtedly possesses the right to do so; and any one opposing the exercise of the right at once raises the very thing her theory lacks that is a collateral circumstance in its support. If he is not there, why object to a search?"

"I do not know that any one does object, General Williams. We are told by the people in charge, and that is the opinion generally of the public, that for some time past the mine has

been filled with gases destructive to human life, and cannot be entered. But no one has offered to enter the mine, nor have we any reason to suppose that any resistance would be made were we to propose to do it."

"Is the place kept locked and guarded?" asked General Williams, after thinking a moment.

"It is, General. I was there this morning, and found six men in the place at an early hour, and the door locked on the inner side."

"But you were allowed to enter?"

"Yes, I was let in, after some hesitation."

"Did you see anything unusual?"

"Nothing; but I am wholly unaccustomed to mines."

"I see, I see," cried the General, rising from his chair, and, walking up and down the room, "you would not have suspected, or understood it, had there been anything unusual. You did not offer to descend?"

"No, I did not," answered Harry, "I did not deem it prudent."

"Certainly," said the General, still walking up and down. "Of course you did not; if the story of the choke damp was true, you could not go on."

"If it was false, the danger would have even been greater from other causes."

"I see, I see; you could not go down, or even talk about it. You acted prudently." After musing for a time, the General continued, "If you are to act on the young lady's theory, Mr. Stacey, you owe it to her to go upon the full presumption that Mr. Graham is in the mine and living, at the moment you act. Any other course would not only fail, in the event of her being correct in her notion, but would result most disastrously to the prisoner. Those who may now be simply detaining him for a time, till some event is accomplished, for example, possibly with the idea of liberating him hereafter, might, in their alarm for their own safety, destroy him. They must not be apprised of your suspicions, till you are prepared to strike a decisive blow."

"Then, what is your advice, General?" asked Harry.

"A *habeas corpus* is the only remedy that the law can afford. I know of nothing else, but even that, in so delicate a case, I acknowledge to be of doubtful efficacy. If the parties would make resistance of any sort, it would be the better for us.

A resistance to the process would arouse public opinion and a riot would follow, or rather the mine would be attacked at once, by a mob of angry miners, who are the only irresistible force in this country, and the place would be searched by them. If he was found the wrong-doers would be hanged on the spot. But mobs are always spontaneous, and cannot be produced or controlled by individuals. Again, the fact of their resistance to process would furnish what our case lacks. That is some proof, sufficient to overcome the apparent absurdity of the origin of our theory in a sick woman's dream. The very thing I fear is, that the officer will be received with courtesy, and told to descend. Even if he takes the risk, and faces the supposed, noxious gases, the prisoner would have been made away with before assistance could reach him."

Harry confessed the difficulties that lay upon all sides.

"But, General, you recommend the writ in the ordinary way?"

"Oh, yes, there is nothing else that I see. Though I confess that but for the frame of mind into which the daughter seems to have fallen, I should recommend nothing. You are welcome to my office to prepare your papers, Mr. Stacey, and, in the interest of humanity I willingly volunteer my own services in the matter to assist you."

Harry thanked General Williams, and sat down at once.

"I have almost everything prepared now," he said. "I have only to fill in the blanks left in the papers. What course do you recommend, General?"

"Any will do, sir. The writ issues, of course, upon the ordinary affidavits; and to find Mr. Graham is to release him, for there can be no question about the illegality of his detention. Your success will be a matter that will rest more with the sheriff than with the judge. Make it returnable before Judge Puffall. He is in town, I believe. Who makes your affidavits, Mr. Stacey? Who is to swear to the fact of his detention?"

Harry looked up in dismay. He had not thought of this question before.

To procure the writ an oath must be taken to the effect that the person demanding its issuance had good reason to believe, and did believe, that Mr. Graham was detained against his will, and held an unlawful prisoner in the mine, by the individuals in charge thereof.

As a rule, lawyers never like to make affidavits. Perhaps it may arise from a consciousness of the facility with which their clients are generally willing to make them. It is an axiom with

the profession that each man ought, and generally can do, his own swearing, and this theory has been sustained by an experience as old as the invention of oaths.

But here was an exceptional case. Harry had heard Miss Graham say that she was not acting upon reason, that she had no opinions upon the subject, but was moved by an impulse which she felt it her duty to obey.

No doubt, had Harry carried the papers to her, and, without explanation, told her that she must verify them, she would have acted as people generally do under similar circumstances. She would have taken the oath without thinking much about it.

But he did not wish to go to her with it. First, he dreaded to tell her how little faith he had in the dying fancy of her mother. And, again, he did not like the idea of permitting her to be sworn to a fact that, he felt sure, she only half believed.

He explained these difficulties to General Williams, with the bearing they had upon his mind.

"It is now too late for you to do anything to-day," said the General. "You will have until to-morrow morning to deliberate upon your course. No movement must be made till all is ready."

To this Harry agreed, and, as it was near night, took his way to his room at the American Eagle Hotel.

Here he sat down in a brown study, as to what course to pursue. He could not take the oath himself; he did not feel that he had sufficient cause for believing that Mr. Graham was in the mine. In truth, he did not believe him to be there. Should he go to Helen and explain this fact to her, and ask her to do so, the fact of his own doubt would almost certainly reflect itself in her mind, and she, too, would either refuse to be sworn, or do so, perhaps, with a severe wound to her own conscience.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

## THE OBSTACLE REMOVED.

WHILE Harry was engaged in turning the matter over in his mind, he was disturbed by a knock at his door.

It proved to be Jack Gowdy, the stage-driver, who had just arrived from across the mountains, whither he had gone in his regular turn the day after the funeral of Mrs. Graham.

"How do you do, Jack?" cried Harry, delighted to see his old friend. "I missed you when I came over, greatly to my disappointment, and was obliged to ride all the way inside the coach."

"I am sorry," said Jack, after a burst of pleasure at seeing Harry, during which they both sat down. "But the truth is, sir, that stage-driving is getting into a bad way. Gentlemen are quitting it, and it is falling into the hands of sneaks and trash. Half the drivers now don't know a gentleman when they see him. And good reason why, sir. Because they have not been brought up gentlemen themselves. It is not in them, sir. They think because a man has got on a black coat that he is a gentleman, and so they fill up the best seats with tract peddlers, exhorters, and Methodist preachers, and white-check men of all sorts, — fellows that would be afraid to risk a bogus Mexican dollar on four aces. If I don't have mighty big luck and get killed soon, I expect to live to see free niggers driving stage!"

Here Jack held up his hands, as if in a mute prayer to the powers above to be permitted, before that dreaded day, to depart in peace.

"When do you go back home, Mr. Stacey? I want to know, so that I can see that you are not obliged to ride with any bluebellied Yankees, or free niggers. For if there is anything in this world that I hate, it is the company of low, ignorant, vulgar people, and I never want to see gentlemen forced to consort with such. I can't stand them, sir."

Harry told Jack that his return was quite uncertain.

"You know I am over here about the suit against Mr. Graham's mine."

"Yes, I heard so," said Jack. "I hope you will get justice for him, especially as he is away. All he wants, you know, is a square deal, and then he is bound to beat the thieves. Old Snakeweed is against you, I believe, is he not?"

"Yes," said Harry, "but the chief lawyer for that side is the great man of the Washoe bar, Mr. Napoleon B. Spelter."

"Is he, though?" said Jack, with a long face. "Well, I am sorry, for they say he never loses a trick, but just clears the board every deal. My business in here was to say to you that old Snakeweed will, most likely, come over with me, and if he does, I can run him off over the bank and break his neck, if that will be of any service to you. It would only be to kill two birds with one stone, for, you know, I owe him a little balance on an old account."

"No," said Harry, laughing at Jack's serious air, "it would not be the least benefit; for there are a dozen just like him now here, to take his place. If poor Mr. Graham was only at home, they would not bring on the trial. It is to take advantage of his extraordinary disappearance, that they are now pressing the matter forward."

"Why don't you send over to Salt Lake, and fetch him home?" said Jack. "There is no reason why he should not be here, except that he is too thin-skinned. If he once understood how people feel towards him, he would come back fast enough."

"Do you think he is at Salt Lake, Jack?"

"Do I think so?" said the stage-driver, confidently. "Why, I don't think anything about it, I know he is there. When you know a thing, you don't think it, do you? — you know it. Well, I know he is at Salt Lake."

"Do you?" cried Harry, eagerly. "How do you know it?"

"How do I know it?" said Jack, stopping, and scratching his head in a perplexed way. "Well, I can't tell you exactly how I know it. I think somebody must have told me so. I can't just remember at this moment who it was; but I have heard it, I am sure."

"Ah, that is the trouble, Jack; nobody knows, of their own knowledge, where the poor gentleman is. His daughter thinks that she knows where he is, but her reasons for knowing it are no better than yours."

"Does she think she knows?" inquired Jack, eagerly. "Where does she think her father is?"

"I don't know that I ought to tell you, Jack, for it is a secret, and must remain so till to-morrow."

"Till to-morrow, Mr. Stacey? Well, can't you trust Jack Gowdy with anything that belongs to that young woman till to-morrow? If you can't, then it's about time he handed in his checks, and quit the game, for his credit has run down to a low pass."

"I don't mean that, Jack," said Harry, "but you know secrets that are not our own, we have no right to divulge."

"But you must tell somebody, Mr. Stacey. If you are going to blow the thing up to-morrow, it's because you are going after the old man. Well, you might want company in the expedition. Jack Gowdy is considered a reliable gentleman when there is any business to be done in his line."

It occurred to Harry in an instant that in the execution of the writ, the sheriff might want assistance; and, having full confidence in Jack's honesty, he told him what was about to be done.

"Miss Graham has an idea, Jack, not a strong one, for it is only a fancy, that her father may be down in the mine."

"What mine, Mr. Stacey?"

"His own mine, Jack, — the Graham mine."

"What is he doing down there? — Dead, does she think?"

"No, she thinks that he is living. She fancies that the men in charge of it are keeping him in the mine a prisoner, for some reason, and she does not know what."

"Whew!" whistled Jack, in a long, clear whistle, not stopping till his lungs were emptied. "That is it, by the living hokey! I hope to be eternally bursted and chewed up, if the old man is not at the bottom of the mine! I feel as if I had known it from the first! Mr. Stacey, that girl knows more than all of us put together; and I said so, the first time I ever clapped eyes on her. You can see it in her nostrils; she has the thorough-bred cut, that no man ever saw in any but first-class stock. Did you ever see a full blooded eclipse colt, Mr. Stacey?"

No; Harry never had.

"Well, it's a pity; for you would understand the points of that girl. She is right, sir; the old man is in the mine, and the thieves are keeping him there."

"Do you think so, Jack?"



"I don't think anything about it ; I know it," said Jack, with more confidence than ever. "And you are going after him, to-morrow, are you, Mr. Stacey ?"

"That has been my plan. I have been drawing the papers to-day, to procure a writ of *habeas corpus*, that will enable us to visit the mine. But just now, I am in a little perplexity about making the oath necessary to procure the writ. I cannot, conscientiously, swear that I believe Mr. Graham is in the mine. It is true that he may possibly be there ; but to say that I believe it, I cannot."

Jack considered a moment, and then he said, —

"I should not think that very heavy swearing would be required in such a case as this. I have known horse thieves, and all sorts of scoundrels to be got clear with a 'habis carcus,' in the States. Somebody must have done the swearing. Now, in an honest case like this, I would think that the wear and tear on the conscience could not be much."

Harry explained that the oath, in each case, was precisely the same.

"Well, that is odd," said Jack. "It looks very strange to me, that it takes as much swearing to get an honest, Christian gentleman away from a pack of garotters and scoundrels, as it takes to get a horse thief out of the penitentiary, when he has been caught riding the nag out of the country. I can't understand it."

Harry could not explain any further than he had already done ; and so, Jack sat apparently revolving the anomaly in his mind. At last he spoke.

"Mr. Stacey," said he, "is the swearing very tall ?"

"I do not precisely understand you, Jack."

"Well, what I mean, is, to ask, is it what might be called rough swearing. Is the swearing necessary to get Mr. Graham out of the hands of them garotters and superintendents, and such like, as seems to have got him down, such very hard swearing that it takes a scientific man to do it ?" Seeing that Harry only looked more perplexed by his question ; he continued, — "what I mean to ask, Mr. Stacey, is this : can a gentleman who has always earned his own living by hard work, and who has not got any too much book learning, — can such a gentleman as that, I say, come square up to the point, if he puts his whole mind to it ?"

Harry explained that the oath was very simple, requiring no

scientific attainments, but being merely a question of conscience.

"Well, that is all right, Mr. Stacey. Now answer me one more question. Suppose a gentleman, not a professional man in such matters, nor yet a scientific man, but say a man who never swore much except privately, on his own account, at stable men, and hostlers, and faro dealers, when they did not pull the cards square, and abolitionists, and free niggers occasionally, in a general way; — suppose, I say, such a man as that should commence swearing up this case, say this evening, as soon as we could commence work, and should keep it up steady, without interruption, till to-morrow morning at five o'clock, do you think we could fetch it up to the notch?"

Harry looked at Jack, laughingly, for he did not quite understand whether or not he was serious, and said, —

"Yes; it can be done in much less time than that, Jack."

"Very well," said Jack, sitting back in his chair, composedly, "that is my hand."

"What do you mean, Jack?" asked Harry.

"I mean, Mr. Stacey, that it would gratify me very much, if I could take a swear at them there documents."

"Do you mean, Jack, that you wish to make the affidavits necessary to procure the writ of *habeas corpus* in this matter?"

"That is precisely what I do want to do, Mr. Stacey. I could not have put it in just those words, but that is what I mean. If you had practised it a week, you could not have hit my idea nearer to the centre."

"But, Jack, do you really believe that Mr. Graham is down in the mine, and that he is detained there against his will, by his own superintendent?"

"Is that what Miss Helen says, Mr. Stacey?"

"That is what she fears may be the case, Jack; she does not say so. She fears that it may be so."

"Is that what them documents say, Mr. Stacey?"

"Yes, Jack; that is the substance of the petition. Now, do you believe it?"

"Do I believe it? Mr. Stacey, I don't believe nothing about it, sir; I told you that at the start. I know he is down there. I am as certain of it, as I am that I am sitting here, at this moment, talking to you. Mr. Stacey, I would back that lady's judgment, if I had the money, for a million of dollars, on any card she would name. It is enough for me to know that she says he is there, or that the chances are that he is there,

and I go my pile on it in any shape the game takes. I'll bet on it ; I'll swear to it ; I'll fight for it ; and, Mr. Stacey, it may not become me to say it, but it is only the frozen truth, by the Eternal ; I'll die for it, if it is necessary. So trot out your papers, and let us begin at once ; because, you know, I leave here at five o'clock in the morning."

"Jack," said Harry, in a hesitating manner, "do you intend to tell me that you wish to make the oaths to this petition upon your present knowledge of the facts?"

"Yes, Mr. Stacey. I've no doubt in the world, in the first place, that Mr. Graham is kept in the mine by the superintendent. And if you knew superintendents as well as I do, you would be as clear about it as I am. I copper all mining superintendents, I do, at every turn. In the second place, there never was a paper drawn, that Miss Graham said was right, or half way right, that I would not swear to till I was black in the face, whether I believed it or not. I tell you, sir, I never go behind that lady's word, and I don't think that any gentleman ought to go behind such a lady's word, or, indeed, any lady's word. It is my duty, as a gentleman, to back up that lady with my coin, with my fire-arms, and with my oath, when it is necessary. And when I forget what a gentleman's duty is towards a lady, especially when that lady is in trouble, I want somebody to tell me that it is time to hand in my checks, and quit ; and I want to hand them in, there and then."

"But, Jack, suppose it should turn out, after all, that Miss Graham was mistaken about the whole matter. What would people say to you ? for you must know, if you make this oath, it will be understood that you are the principal mover in the matter. It will be thought that you are the originator of the whole idea."

"Will it, though ?" cried Jack, evidently delighted at the prospect. "That suits me ; that's my hand. I want them to think so. As for the matter failing, it can't fail, sir ; for the old man is down there, sure. In the next place, if it does, nobody will dare to say a word to Jack Gowdy about it. When he has done his duty to a woman, and that woman in distress, do you think any thieving mining superintendent is going to call him to account for his conduct ? Not if he knows himself ! Do you know, Mr. Stacey, what I would do to that fellow, Bloodstone, that I have always known for a thief, since the first time I put eyes on him, if he should presume to speak

to me about anything I did conscientiously, and in a gentlemanly way, for that poor, grief-stricken lady?"

Harry gave Jack to understand that he was not fully informed upon that point.

"Well, I'll tell you. I would cut both of his ears off smooth to his head. And do you think I would let him go at that? not if I know myself intimately. I would scalp him into the bargain; I would not leave him as much hair as would make a wig for a bald-headed June bug. No, sir; nor half as much, Mr. Stacey," said Jack, wrathfully rising up, as the idea of Bloodstone presuming to call him to account came to his mind. "If the infernal scoundrel comes fooling around me, by God! sir, I will knock out his bung on the spot, and let him run out in the gutter!"

"If you are sincerely in earnest," cried Harry, himself converted by Jack's enthusiasm, to a feeling that he could take the oath with no great stretch of conscience, "we will go at it at once."

"Indeed, I am sincere, Mr. Stacey; and I would consider it only too great an honor to be allowed a chance in that lady's cause, to go at the thieves. That poor lady is in trouble, and Jack Gowdy never forgets that he is a gentleman, when a woman needs the help of one. When he does, Mr. Stacey, he hopes that day will be his last one on this earth."

Jack's boundless faith had converted the young lawyer. He was already growing ashamed of his own scruples. Indeed, the oath was one necessary to be taken. The writ of *habeas corpus*, the shield of oppressed innocence, could not be obtained without it. To delay in such a matter, when life and death really depended upon time, was, after all, carrying matters of conscience, perhaps, to a dangerous point. Jack's enthusiastic willingness had brought Harry to the point that he himself would have taken the oath now, if Jack had not been ready to do so.

"Very well; let us be off, and attend to the matter immediately."

So saying, the two young men arose, and left the room together .

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

## THE KING'S WRIT RUNNETH NOT IN THE GRAHAM MINE.

JACK GOWDY finished the affidavits in time to start away over the mountains at the proper time. Indeed, he was much surprised at the small amount of swearing that sufficed.

"Is that all?" he cried, when told that the business was completed. "I supposed it would take an hour or two, at least."

At an early hour the next morning, Harry appeared before Judge Pufgall and procured the writ of *habeas corpus*, and hurried away in search of the sheriff, to serve it. Everything depended upon the zeal and good faith of the executive officer, in whose hands he should place the writ. He had been told by General Williams from the first that the difficulty lay in that quarter; nor had the General been able to give him much encouragement to hope. "These officers," he said, "are often corrupt, and still more frequently they are influenced by political considerations to favor persons who can serve them hereafter at elections. This might seriously inconvenience your operations, even in a case where there was a marked probability of foul play. But in this case, the officer will most surely disbelieve the whole story. He will feel certain from the beginning that nothing can come of it, and he will hesitate to offend anybody by a zealous and vigorous execution of the writ. There is, therefore, great danger that if he performs his duty at all, it will be in so lax and prefatory a manner that no good will come of it. But you can only try and do your best. Fortune may favor you in some special manner."

With these very discouraging words still in his ear, the young man directed his steps to the office of the sheriff. He was received politely enough, and presented his papers. The officer examined them in silence, and appeared, when he had read them, to be not a little perplexed.

"Mr. Graham detained in his own mine,—by his superintendent and certain workmen!" said he, at last, repeating in a tone

of doubt the substance of the petition. "Why do you think so, sir?"

This petition to Harry was one calculated to draw out a sharp reply. His impulse was, to suggest that it did not concern the officer why he thought so, as the order of the court was all that he need look at. But, remembering the peculiarity of his position, he made an answer tending to pass the matter over as pleasantly as possible.

"It had been thought," so he said, "that Mr. Graham was imprisoned there, but he was not at liberty for the moment to disclose the grounds for the notion."

"It is the idea of an insane person," answered the officer. "The mine is filled with mephitic gases, and no person can live for a moment within it."

"Have you been in the mine, recently, sir?" asked Harry.

"No," answered the officer; "but I hear so from everybody. I have no doubt that such is the case."

"Will you execute the writ?" asked the lawyer, struggling to keep down his anger.

"I am not the sheriff," answered the man, coolly.

"You are not the sheriff! What are you, then?"

"I am only his deputy. The sheriff is absent in a distant part of the country, and will not be back for three days."

"But if you are his deputy, what is to prevent your serving this writ?"

"Nothing, only I thought perhaps you might prefer to have the chief officer, instead of a subordinate. He may have some power of successfully inhaling and living in the midst of choke-damps, that a mere deputy does not possess. I am sure I do not wish to try it; at least, not till I am high sheriff."

This the man said with a sneer that boded ill for poor Harry's success.

"I cannot wait for his return, sir, and must ask you to do it."

"Very well," said the man, folding up the papers and shoving them into a pigeon-hole of his desk. "I will attend to it in the course of the day."

"But," cried Harry, in distress, "I would like to go with you when you serve the papers; and I am here now for that purpose."

"It will not be necessary," said the man, coldly. "I know Mr. Bloodstone very well. He is one of my most intimate friends. There will be no obstacle thrown in the way of the

writ, believe me, sir. My friend, Mr. Bloodstone, is a gentleman who respects the law of the land, and would not, I am sure, raise a finger to obstruct its execution. You need give yourself no uneasiness about the matter. In the course of the day I will call on him, and we will do our duty."

"But what is to prevent your attending to it at once?"

"I am not obliged by the law to do so, sir; so long as we act with reasonable diligence, the law is satisfied. If you are a lawyer, sir, you must know that. I do not wish to disturb my friend, Mr. Bloodstone, of whose innocence of this disgraceful charge, I am already as well convinced as if I had been through the mine. I am aware sir," he continued, with a lofty manner, observing Harry looking at him with an expression of astonishment, not unmingled with anger, "that my private opinions do not relieve me from the necessity of performing my official duty, nor shall I permit them to do so in any manner. But I am not obliged to forget that my friend is a gentleman, simply because some needy attorney chooses to trump up against him a charge as frivolous as it is scandalous."

Harry felt a strong disposition to strike the man, but it was certain that by doing so all would be surely ruined. He considered a moment and then asked the sheriff not to go farther in the matter till he should return.

"I will call again in half an hour."

"Very well," said the deputy-sheriff, coolly. "As you please; I will not move in the matter before afternoon, in any event."

"Good morning, sir."

Harry hurried away as fast as he could go, to the office of General Williams.

"Well, sir, what progress?" cried that gentleman, directly that Harry entered the room.

The poor fellow was so discouraged and disappointed, that he was ready to burst into tears.

"Something is wrong, I am sure," continued the General. "I know it from the expression of your face. I feared you would fail; where is the obstacle?"

Harry at last summoned courage and told him all that had occurred at the sheriff's office.

General Williams appeared deeply interested.

"Our case is not made any worse against Bloodstone," he said at last; "and therefore not any better for us. It is not likely that he knows anything of this as yet; but he will know

in a few minutes, for the sheriff's officer will send him word. Mr. Stacey!" and here the General stopped in front of Harry, and spoke in a decided manner. "My advice now is,—I have no doubt precisely what you have in your own mind. Our blow has miscarried. It is too late to remedy the error. No matter what our private opinions may be as to the whereabouts of Mr. Graham, based upon general probabilities; we owe it to his daughter and to humanity to act in all respects as if we fully believe that at this moment he is at the bottom of his own mine, still living, but kept a prisoner by a band of wicked and unscrupulous men. Such being, therefore, with us the established fact, what must be the result of continuing our present course? Clearly, it will be the immediate destruction of the prisoner. They will kill him in an hour, simply to avoid the disgraceful disclosure, to say nothing of the danger they run. For if he should be found there, a mob of miners would probably hang the whole batch of conspirators at the door of the hoisting shed. If he is found at all, it will be only his dead body at the bottom of some pit, or floating in the water, where it will be said he had thrown himself in a fit of desperation, equivalent to insanity, produced by his financial troubles. It will be more likely that he will not be found at all, but will be successfully secreted."

"What do you advise me to do?" asked Harry, with a despondent voice; for he had, as General Williams suggested, already arrived at a most decided conclusion in his own mind.

"Hasten away at once, and withdraw your papers!" answered the General, promptly. "Say that you have become convinced that it is all a mistake of somebody; some crazy man; an idle chimera, not worth pursuing."

Harry was away in a minute, and soon bolted into the office of the sheriff.

"I have come to ask leave to withdraw the writ of *habeas corpus*," he said. "I feel that I have been misled, and that the person who reported the matter has made a grave and serious mistake."

Poor Harry was telling the truth, for he referred to himself, and his blundering manner in showing his hand before knowing what he could expect of the officer. The deputy received him more cordially than before.

"I have been looking the papers over," he said, "and became already satisfied that you were not to blame. You are, I perceive, a stranger here and have acted upon the informa-



tion of one Jack Gowdy,—a low, disreputable character, a drunken stage-driver ; indeed, who was no doubt under the influence of intoxicating spirits when he imagined his remarkable story. I know the fellow to be drunk half his time."

Harry rose and made an effort to call upon Helen. He found her sitting by the window, looking up the street in the direction her father used to come home from the mine. Charley Hunter, who was reading a book in a corner of the room, went out as soon as Harry entered. Blanche McIver had gone away that morning in Jack Gowdy's coach back to San Francisco. She had been obliged, in obedience to a telegram from her father, to go over for a few days only, and would be back again soon, so she promised, by her friend's side.

Helen rose when she saw Harry, and came to meet him.

"What news do you bring me?" she asked, without waiting for him to speak.

He could only shake his head, but this was enough to cause the young lady to turn pale, as if about to fall. He drew a chair to where she stood, and she dropped into it.

"Tell me about it," she asked, in a faint voice.

"The case is not so bad as you fear, Miss Graham," he said. "It is only I who have failed. The position of your father has not, I trust, been injured."

"What do you mean?" she asked.

Then Harry told her all that had been done, even to the minutest particular. He confessed to her how hasty and even feeble had been his own conduct. "I know that I have shown myself wholly unequal to this business, Miss Graham ; and I am deeply mortified at a failure that appears to me to be my own fault almost entirely."

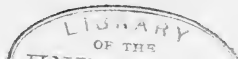
"What am I to do now?" she asked.

"I feel altogether unable to advise you, Miss Graham, especially after the blunder I have already made."

But he told her what had been said by General Williams.

"These are also my own views," he added, "if you will admit that one who has acted so weakly can have views upon anything."

"I do not see that you have been to blame, Mr. Stacey," she said at last. "It appears to me that the law is weak, when its enforcement can be stayed or kept back by such influences as have caused the miscarriage of your plans. But, Mr. Stacey," she continued, with an earnestness that showed her to be upon



the point of bursting into tears, "what am I to do? I cannot wait. My poor father may be dying at this moment. He may not have food. I cannot permit him to die of hunger, and I here in the same place and within a few hundred feet of him. I must bring him out of that place. I must, indeed!" here she broke down, and sobbed forth, "I promised my darling mother, as I lay in her arms when she was dying, that I would go to my poor father and bring him away. What shall I do, Mr. Stacey?"

Harry with difficulty kept back the tears from his own eyes. "The place is kept securely locked and bolted, Miss Graham. Any attack upon the mine by a force, no matter how strong, could not gain admittance until after time enough had been given the body of men, constantly kept in the hoisting sheds, to make away with your father, if he is detained there. Such an attack, even if it could be made, would only insure his immediate destruction; these men would never allow him to be brought out alive, to tell the story of his imprisonment. But, if he were once without the place, nobody having seen him there, they might not dread any statement he could make; they would deny it, and show its absurdity."

"Can you suggest nothing that could be successful?" she asked, in a tone of despair.

"Yes," he said, "anything that will cause it to be the interest of his keepers, to let him come out. Whatever Mr. Bloodstone's wishes are, if done, might withdraw his motive for holding your father."

Helen started up, looked at Harry, as if she had received a blow. "True," she said, "I should look in that quarter. I had no claim upon you, Mr. Stacey. I am well aware of that, and should have addressed myself at once to that man. It is not to the rejected, but to the accepted lover, that I should have turned." This she said with a bitterness, that brought Harry out at once.

"Do not misunderstand me, Miss Graham," he said. "You do me a great injustice, when you suppose that my actions, or my words, have been, or are, the result of disappointment or of envy at the success of another. Indeed you do, Helen."

She saw that he was wounded, and hastened to apologize. "I did not mean to hurt your feelings," she cried; "I only spoke the truth, when I said that to Mr. Bloodstone I ought to have gone for assistance when in trouble. But what more can I do, than I am ready to do? I have told him that I will

be his wife the very instant he brings my father to me. And I will do it, even now, Mr. Stacey, if my promise shall have the effect to liberate my father. I will do it, though my father should object ; I will do it, though Mr. Bloodstone be the man who has imprisoned him. I will do anything that will enable me to obey my mother's wishes, though I should plunge myself into a life-time of grief by doing so. I have nothing left but my poor self. Anything that is not wicked I will do, or suffer, to save my father. More my mother would not wish of me ; would not permit me."

"Miss Graham," said Harry, "I, too, would do almost anything for either your father or your mother, living, or to fulfil their dying wishes when dead. As for what I might be willing to do to oblige their daughter, it would not be becoming in me now to say. I have done all that I can think that would be of any possible advantage to your father, should he be in the mine. Any further steps on the part of the legal authorities would, in my opinion, simply endanger his life, and could avail him nothing. But I am here, not to throw obstacles in your way, but to assist you, — you have but to command, and I will obey. I am ready to perform anything you suggest. I will do it blindly, without so much as once stopping to examine it by any rule of reason ; only speak, and you shall see how I will obey you."

"I am convinced of your faithfulness to my father, and to my mother's memory, Mr. Stacey ; and I do not doubt your friendship for myself. But I am a weak woman. I can only hope, and plead, and pray ; I cannot suggest anything. I do not know what to suggest ; I am powerless."

"When you think of any plan for your father's benefit, Miss Graham, will you let me, at least, assist you in its performance ?"

"Yes, when I think of anything. But how can I ? If God in his wisdom does not help me, what can I, alone, do to help myself ? I can only wait and suffer."

And so, after two or three hours spent in suggesting impracticable or impossible plans, only made to be rejected, Harry withdrew, leaving Miss Graham sobbing in hopeless anguish in the chair by the window where he had found her.

As he went out, Charley Hunter, who sat bolt upright in the hall, like a sentinel on duty, rose up and bid him good-day in a cheerful voice. The change from so much grief to the ordinary tone of passing life, startled Harry for a moment.

"Good-evening, Charley," he said, kindly, and continued his way in the direction of his own room.

The boy entered No. 16 to resume his book. He found Helen more than usually broken down, and, attracted by her immoderate grief, he approached the window.

"You seem to be in great trouble to-day, Miss Helen," he said, kindly.

"Yes, Charley," she said, in the midst of her convulsive sobs, "I am in very great trouble."

"In very great trouble?" asked the boy, eagerly. "Did I understand you rightly, Miss Graham?"

"Yes, I am in very great trouble, Charley. In such great trouble, that I do not feel able to bear up against it. I am indeed in very great trouble."

She had not looked at the boy while she spoke. Her face had been buried in her hands, and her answers to his questions had been slowly made, and at intervals, between her sobs, as if she could not summon strength to answer fully at once.

The boy stood for a little time gazing at her in anxious eagerness, and with evident sympathy for so much sorrow. Observing that she had finished with her answer to his question, and was apparently too much grieved to add more, he made no other remark, but noiselessly withdrew from the room, closing the door carefully behind him, as if not to attract her attention, and stole away out of the house.

The sun was slowly sinking behind the Sierra Nevadas, throwing the shadows of those lofty peaks down upon the valleys of Washoe, and the Truckee, in ghostly figures, fantastic and changeable. The top of the sugar-loaf was still glistening, as the last rays lodged upon it, while the distant Humboldt hills to the north-east, were dimming down beneath the gathering haze of approaching evening. It was late in the day for the commencement of a journey in that wild country, where, beyond the line of inhabited villages, each man advanced at his personal peril, taking his life in his hand as he went. But it was at this hour, and while Helen Graham still sat sobbing at her parlor window, that a horseman dashed at full speed down the Truckee grade, and, as he passed out of the town, headed his way straight for the boundless desert, that then swallowed up all the unknown land east of the Washoe country. His blanket and sack of provisions strapped behind him, the belt about his waist, and revolvers at his side, all indicated a long journey. His speed alone was so great as to suggest either that he bore

the overland express, or that his journey was to be a short one. The horseman, however, jingled his huge Mexican spurs, and the spirited brown steed stretched away with a will that sent the steam flying in two jets from his distended nostrils, while his broad chest soon became white with flakes of falling foam. So he passed down the narrow shelf cut in the mountain side to the valley, dashing over the Truckee meadows at a sweeping gallop, nor drew rein till far in the night he pulled up and demanded hospitality at the door of a station fifty miles towards Pyramid lake. The pioneer, hearing English spoken, arose and cautiously drew his bolt to let in the wayfarer. And Charley Hunter and his steed were made welcome in the settler's cabin. By the terms of the lad's employment, when Helen Graham should find herself in very great trouble, he was without delay to mount the brown horse at the stable, and carry the word to Greathouse, away in the Indian country. He had waited from week to week, all this time with steady patience, for the outcry of unbearable grief to fall from the lady's lips. At last it had come, and the faithful messenger had bounded forth upon his journey.

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## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

### JOSEPH BOWERS, OF CALUMET CREEK.

JACK GOWDY came back two days after the affair of the *habeas corpus* had been attempted and failed, and heard for the first time what an important part he had been playing. He found out, greatly to his delight, that he was credited with having originated the suspicion against Mr. Bloodstone, and with instigating and procuring the writ to be issued. He was so proud of his sudden greatness, that he stopped off one trip, sending another driver in his place. Then he put on an extra six-shooter, and walked up and down the streets in company with a friend, an ox-teamster, named Joe Bowers, of Calumet Creek, hunting, as he said, for the man that thought he had done anything unbecoming in a gentleman. It is

scarcely necessary to add that, though he searched for two days with great diligence, he was unable to find any such person. He took occasion, at the same time, to send word by his friend the ox-teamster to Mr. Bloodstone, that he should be in town for two days, and that if, during the time, he should fall in with that gentleman, he should make it his duty to scalp him on the spot. We may also mention that the superintendent kept very close within doors during the time mentioned in Jack's message, and did not meet the twain in his walks. Jack explained to Harry that his reasons for adopting this course was in order to smooth down any opposition or ill-feeling that might otherwise spring up about the *habeas corpus*. And while Jack remained in town, it is certain that the effect of his action did tend to smooth matters, to an amazing degree. Jack now called on Helen Graham, for the first time since her mother's death. He had brought a message of love from Blanche McIver. She had ridden over the mountains with Jack on her way home, and had quite captivated him. Next to Helen, she was unquestionably the finest woman in the world. She was just the sort of girl he always liked. It turned out that she had sat outside with him all the way over the mountains, and had driven the horses up the Carson grade.

"You ought to see her hold the lines, Miss Helen!" cried Jack, in raptures, "there never was anything like it. I am to fetch her back again when she comes. She won't ride with anybody except me, miss."

"When is she coming back?" asked Helen.

"In a very few days," answered Jack. "She says she can't bear to be away from you when you are in so much trouble. She calls you her Baby and says she must be with you all the time. And I don't wonder at it, miss," he said kindly, when he saw the tears rush, as they did unbidden, to the lady's eyes.

"She is the kindest creature in the world," said Helen, "and the best. I love her dearly."

"And so do I," cried Jack, with enthusiasm. "I don't know which I love the best, you or her. But I think I have known you the longest and, besides, you need love the most," said Jack, almost ready to cry in sympathy with the tears that he saw glistening upon Helen's long lashes.

"You are very kind, Jack. I shall never forget your goodness."

This last remark quite settled the question and the stage

driver began to blubber outright. He had been standing while all this had been said, although Helen had pressed him to take a seat.

No, he was in a fearful hurry and could not stay a moment. But now, when the tears began to run down his nose, she contrived to get him into a chair, where he sat twisting his hat in his hands and protesting positively that he had not a single minute to stay. But he did remain a half-hour, and then an hour, as if unable to go. The truth was that he had come for the purpose of giving or lending, in some manner, he did not precisely know how, to Helen the five hundred dollars that he had offered once before to Fogg, the landlord, for her benefit, and been refused. He had kept the money faithfully ever since, declining positively to attack faro while it was in his possession.

"It is not my money," he thought. "I have set it aside for the relief of a distressed lady. And no gentleman ever risks other people's coin, especially when those other people are women."

Such being the state of the case, he was exceedingly desirous of delivering the money into her own custody, so that he would no longer be chargeable with its safe-keeping.

"When I give it to her I can take a chance against any sort of game that comes in my way, while now I am tied up hand and foot."

Jack had bolted into No. 16 with a set speech in his mouth, prepared and ready to deliver it with his money to the young lady. The speech consisted of an account of an imaginary conversation held between Mr. Graham and himself, in which that gentleman had, several months before, at the suggestion of his own good heart, lent Jack, at a moment when he was in great need, the sum of five hundred dollars. This speech would not occupy more than two minutes, he was quite sure. Indeed, he had left Joe Bowers, an old friend of his that he had known in Missouri, at the door of the hotel to wait for him, not above five minutes at the utmost. But now an hour had passed away, and still Jack sat twisting his hat in his hand, and trying vainly to summon up courage to commence. More than once he had drawn in his breath and uttered the first word of his oration, but could get no farther. Jack had prepared his speech to begin with the words, —

"Miss Graham! your father, the noblest and most elegant gentleman that ever walked on top of the earth, —"

From this it was to continue in a similar strain of eloquent laudation to the narrative of the money transaction that was supposed to have taken place between them and to close with a brilliant peroration, in which Jack was to lay the money at the afflicted daughter's feet. Several times he got as far as to pronounce the words, "Miss Graham, —"

"What is it, Jack?" would be the lady's reply, to indicate that she had been attentive.

But the rest of the speech died in his throat.

"Do you know that that Cheatham colt of mine is threatened with a spavin, Miss Graham?"

"No; is he, indeed? What a pity. I hope you will be able to prevent it."

"Yes; I am trying the only remedy that I know of, and that is mustang liniment. Joe Bowers is waiting for me down at the door now, to go and look at him. Joe is not much on horses, but when it comes to horned cattle, I would take his judgment against any man that walks on top of the ground. He is great on oxen, he is."

Here Jack got up and looked out of the window, hoping to find that his friend, Mr. Bowers, had abandoned the field in despair and gone away. But not so. He still walked up and down as patiently as if following a team of his favorite beasts over a long road. It was evident that he had no idea that the five minutes had elapsed or was even in a great part consumed.

"Damn an ox-driver," Jack muttered to himself. "He has no notion of time. A minute is all the same to him as a month. He would not stir from that spot in a year."

Now that Jack knew that his friend was waiting for him below, he attributed his inability to deliver his speech wholly to that circumstance.

"I could go on in a half an hour longer," he thought, "but I never can do it now that I know that that confounded bush-whacker is waiting for me to go with him."

Jack felt a strong disposition moving him to shoot at his friend from the window.

"I could break his leg," he thought, "and then some charitable person would come and take him away to the hospital. While he was getting well I could tell the lady all about the money, and persuade her to take it."

While this energetic plan of getting rid, temporarily, of his friend was being resolved in Jack's mind as he looked down from the window at him, Helen was attracted by the strange fig-



ure of the ox-driver, still walking back and forth upon the sidewalk.

Joe Bowers was a tall, lank, raw-boned back-woodsman. At least three inches above six feet in stature, he was dressed in such a manner as to give the most ludicrous effect to his peculiar figure. His hair and beard, both of the color originally known as sandy, were so mixed with dust as to have become of a decided brick color. It was obvious that neither scissors nor razors had passed over either hair or beard for many years, and even the presence of a comb since that remote period was a matter not wholly free from doubt. His hat was so broad, so worn, and so slouched, as almost to conceal the long hair that hung down over his shoulders. As for its color, it was the same as that of the road over which he drove his oxen. A dusty miner's shirt, open at the throat, exposed a dusty neck and breast, while a begrimed belt prevented the dusty trousers that hung about his lank legs from subsiding quite away into the dusty boots that enclosed them in a friendly and dusty embrace. Even the six-shooter that hung at the worn, and now yellow belt, had once been polished bright enough, but now the dust of Washoe had settled upon it and given to it the monotonous color, that of brick-dust, that characterized the ox-teamster from head to foot.

"Is that your friend Bowers?" said Helen, trying to repress a smile at the queer figure the ox-driver presented.

"Yes," answered Jack, "that is Joe. You do not know him, Miss Graham. I wish you did. Joe Bowers is one of the most elegant gentlemen that walks on top of the earth, though he is at times a little slow."

"Perhaps it is the dust that gets on him, Jack, and weighs him down," suggested Helen.

"No, Miss Graham; I don't think that has much to do with it, though he has certainly been rather dusty for the last few years. Joe Bowers is slow because he is an ox-driver, and it is not easy to get any very high rate of speed out of a gentleman who follows that calling for a livelihood. You can't just expect it, miss; oxen make a slow team. And, besides, Joe Bowers has been crossed in love. Being crossed in love, Miss Graham, is not a thing calculated to put much steam into a man; indeed, it is quite wonderful how it slows him down. But, though Joe Bowers is slow from the reasons I have told you of, Miss Graham, a finer gentleman never cracked whip over any sort of a beast."

"Where was he crossed in love, Jack? In this country?"

"No, Miss Graham, it was back home in Missouri. He was in love with a young lady of the name of 'Liza, and she lived on the North Fork of the South Fork of Injin Creek. What her other name was, I never heard. Joe don't talk much about it now. But anyhow they were engaged to be married. Joe, you must know, is a very high-toned and proud gentleman for an ox-driver, and he thought that, before taking a wife, he ought to try and make himself a little better off. As it was, he had nothing excepting his ox-team. He was ambitious and wanted to have a farm of his own. Now mark, Miss Graham, what comes of being too anxious to obtain wealth. It was that which did the business for Joseph Bowers. He left his old home on Calumet Creek, and came out to California and went to work hauling quartz rock with his team from the mines to the mills, and was doing very well at that business. But what was going on back at home all of this time? Have you any idea, Miss Graham?"

Helen confessed that she was utterly ignorant upon that point.

"Well, I will tell you. There was a gentleman lived in Joe's neighborhood who knew this lady that Joe was engaged to marry. This gentleman was a butcher by profession, and the institution where he carried on his business was near to the house of the young lady's father. In fact, I believe the old codger took his meat of this gentleman. Well, in that way, he got acquainted with this lady of Joe's, and the first thing, you know, he was dead in love with her and wanting to marry her. To make a long story short, from what I can find out, he offered himself to that lady and she accepted him, forgetting all about my friend there, and married him and left poor Joe out in the cold. That is the whole story. Ike Bowers, Joe's brother, wrote to him about it when all was over and told the sad news. Joe has never been as lively since he heard of the way Eliza had treated him, though he was never a very lively man. Ox-drivers never are. But this cross in love, I think, lowered his speed considerably. It slowed him down. He is very slow now. He can't go above three miles in four hours since he heard of it; and he has never cut his hair or brushed his clothes since, and I don't think he ever will."

Helen thought the story a very sad one, and looked pityingly out of the window at the unfortunate victim of a hopeless and unrequited love. Having finished the story, Jack found himself no nearer the point of offering Helen the money than before.

His courage quite left him and he gave up the attempt in despair. He took his leave and joined Joe Bowers, not feeling very pleasantly towards that gentleman, whose patient waiting in the street he connected with his failure.

"I can't summon courage to offer money to that lady," he said to himself, as he walked away, "though I much fear she needs it. I march up boldly enough till I meet her face to face, but she is so tall and so pale, and she looks so grand in her black dress, that I feel that money is not good enough for her, and that it would be an act of impertinence to offer it." So he took his friend, Joe Bowers, and they went away together to the Graham mine to survey the outside of the premises. Jack had, without difficulty, convinced the ox-driver that Mr. Graham was imprisoned in the mine. He had done this by simply telling him that such was the fact. Mr. Bowers had not required an additional proof.

It was now within two days of the time of the trial, and Harry was still without any reliable witness to prove the original settlement and continued possession of Mr. Graham. True, he would not be called upon to prove these facts until after the plaintiffs should have furnished evidence of a settlement and possession by their venders, the brothers Bosh. But that they would prove this by a swarm of perjured witnesses was a matter of absolute certainty. To meet this he had been able so far to find no counter evidence whatever. In despair he went once more to find Mr. Enoch Bloodstone. "I will make a final appeal to him," said he, "and try to prevail upon him to aid me in saving Mr. Graham's rights." To his amazement, the superintendent had that morning gone away to San Francisco to be absent a month. Harry was thunderstruck. It was now certain that a conspiracy existed to seize Mr. Graham's mine under color of the law. Another idea struck him. "The Pactolus mine is attacked by a similar claim, growing, in fact, out of the same alleged settlement of one or both of the Bosh brothers." He had seen Mr. Withergreen the day before and conversed with him about the facts. He must know something about the history of Mr. Graham's rights, as the two mines were side by side. He hurried down to the office of the Pactolus Company, and inquired for the president. He had gone to San Francisco that very morning for an indefinite period. No work was being done at the mine, and all the people had been discharged, ex-

cept a single watchman. Harry talked with the man, but he was a stranger, having come to the Territory within the month, and knew nothing of titles or early settlements.

The young lawyer was now at his wit's end. "I cannot expect to successfully defend the suit," he said, "but I will attend and do all I can to impede their progress."

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## CHAPTER XXXIX.

### THE SKY IS MORE OVERCAST.

EACH day that passed appeared to add to the gloom that hung like a dark cloud before the eyes of Helen Graham. She could see no way to escape from the tide of troubles that appeared rising higher and higher, till now it threatened to swallow her up. Enoch Bloodstone, since her mother's death, had again resumed his visits; calling at least once in each day, and remaining with her half an hour. When this visit had been made and the man was gone, she breathed more freely for a time; but soon the consciousness that the period for a like visit was slowly swinging around, commenced again wearing upon her drooping spirits. For some time after the funeral he did not refer to the marriage. Helen had been living in perpetual dread of this. At each visit her only hope was that it might not be referred to, at least for that time. But one day he sat longer than usual, and it turned out as Helen dreaded, that it was to bring up the hateful subject.

"I hope you have not forgotten your promise, Miss Graham," he said, with the tone of a man who reminds his butcher of an order given for a joint for dinner. "True, you stipulated for the presence and consent of your father; but it is not my fault that he is away."

Helen felt herself too much in his power to deny her engagement or to attempt to avoid it. She would gladly have married the man if by doing so she could aid her father or fetch him back in safety. She could not tell him of her mother's fancy, that he was the cause of her father's absence. "If this man

suspects what is in my mind he may go and murder my poor father, and so I may be the cause of his death."

"No, I have not forgotten it, Mr. Bloodstone," she answered. "I did promise to become your wife, and have no disposition to evade its performance. You cannot ask me to marry you while my father's fate is in so much doubt. But I will do so at any moment, Mr. Bloodstone, that, he is restored to his home. Bring him back to me, and bring with you a clergyman or an officer, and I will go away your wife as soon after as the marriage service can be celebrated. Indeed," she cried, "I swear by my hopes for heaven that I will do it! I will marry you, Mr. Bloodstone, if you fetch him back, with or without his consent! I will marry you though he stands up before the whole world and forbids the bans!"

Poor Helen said this in the earnestness of her heart, hoping to tempt the man to yield up the prisoner that each day she was becoming more confident he held. It was as one offers a reward for the return of stolen goods; so much to be paid, and no questions asked. But she dared say no more, lest he should suspect that which was in her mind.

"I am glad to see you coming to your senses so rapidly," said Mr. Bloodstone. "I have resolved to marry you, Miss Graham," he said, in a voice that Helen thought had become more hard and odious than ever. "I resolved to do it almost the first time I ever saw you. In making that resolution, I think I paid you a high compliment. A man with such a fortune as I have don't usually go so much out of his way to marry any girl. They generally come to him. But you are the finest woman in the country, and I tell you, frankly, that is the reason why I am going to marry you. I shall be very proud of you, as any man would be who had worked as hard and as long to carry a point as I have, in courting you. Besides, any man would be proud of having the handsomest wife in the country. As for your loving me, I am quite sure you will come to that before we have been married very long. Don't you think so, my beauty?"

Helen burst into tears. He had, by this speech, shown her the condition of utter helplessness to which she had been brought more plainly than it had ever appeared before.

"I shall pray God to give me strength to do my duty," she answered, with a meekness to which Enoch Bloodstone had never believed she could be brought.

"Splendid, my charmer!" he cried, "we are getting on finely. We will be a happy husband and wife, I am quite sure,

one of these days. When I come again," he said, "I shall talk with you more plainly about fixing the time. I have never had any serious doubt about your coming around to my views. It is satisfactory to find that you know upon which side your bread is buttered as well as any of your sex. Girls don't kick over a fellow with plenty of coin in his pocket these times, I can tell you. Good-morning, Miss Graham. I shall be back to see you again before very long, and then we will talk business."

When he was gone, Helen fell upon her knees and prayed for endurance, for aid from God, to enable her to stand up and still march under her burthen; for it was becoming too heavy for her strength to bear. She prayed that she might do nothing, that she had done nothing to add to the perils of the prisoner; for now she no longer doubted where her father was. Bloodstone's manner had too plainly spoken to her heart to let her mistake the truth.

"He has him fast in his power, and will not release him till I first become his wife. O God! give me strength to do my duty. Soften the heart of this wicked, cruel man, and bring my poor father back to life again."

Then she prayed to her mother, whose gentle spirit, she was sure, still hovered over her.

"Oh, mamma, encourage and strengthen your poor Baby, and help her to do her duty. Show her how to obey your last sacred wishes."

She rose up, feeling relieved in her mind.

"My father is living," she thought, "and the price of his return is to be my hand. I am ready to pay the forfeit."

The black curtain that had shut out her bright hopes had been so long before her eyes that she was growing accustomed to it, as one gets used to a dark room. The fairy isle had long ceased to haunt even her slumbers. It no longer in her dreams drifted invitingly towards her, floating softly upon the bosom of the lake. Despair had settled in her heart, and was now quite at home there.

Two days of agony passed away, during which each tap at the door filled her with terror, lest it should open to admit Bloodstone, perhaps accompanied by a priest. But he did not come.

In the afternoon of the third day she was startled by a visit from Henry Stacey. Of late, his anxiety about the approaching trial had been so great that he could scarcely spare a moment from it.

The young man was much excited when he entered No. 16. Everything was going against him. Helen asked him what new disaster had burst upon their falling fortunes.

She had never paid the slightest attention to the lawsuit; that was a matter of no consequence. The loss of the mine, at any moment, would, to her, have appeared a positive God-send. The mine had been the prolific source of all their misfortunes. It had ruined her father, had killed her mother. Its very name never failed to call up a shudder that ran through her frame, leaving her broken and dispirited. So it had been, even more decidedly, with her mother.

When Henry told her of the difficulty that he had met with in obtaining the necessary proofs to sustain her father's rights, she listened with careless indifference, and scarcely made an effort to reply.

"Why should he occupy his time in fighting over the horrid mine?" as last she asked.

"Because it is my duty to do it," he answered.

"That is certainly a sufficient reason, if such be the fact," she said, listlessly. "But when you have done your duty you can be expected to do no more. It is not your fault if you cannot find witnesses."

"No, indeed it is not," cried the young man. "Yesterday I went once more to see Mr. Bloodstone, and to invoke his aid, and—would you believe it?—at such a time he has gone away to San Francisco for a fortnight, or even a month, some say."

"Gone to San Francisco!" cried Helen, now all interest. "Has Bloodstone gone away to San Francisco?"

"Yes," said Harry, "he left yesterday morning."

Helen burst into tears.

"Now, indeed," she sobbed, "my poor father is lost. The men left in charge of the mine will let him perish."

Harry tried to reassure her as well as he could, but in vain.

"While Bloodstone was here," she said, "there was hope. Now who is to give him food and drink in his horrid dungeon?"

"If he is in the mine, Miss Graham," urged the young lawyer, "then the men left in the place are in the secret, depend upon it, and they will do all that Mr. Bloodstone would have done."

"Mr. Stacey," at last asked Helen, when Harry had urged

this view of the case upon her for a long time, without success, looking at him earnestly, "do you believe that my father is in that mine?"

Harry was staggered by the directness of the question.

"Tell me the truth," she insisted, seeing him hesitate.

"Not fully," at last he answered, "though I swear to you, Miss Graham, that all of my conduct in search of him has been based upon the theory that he is there. I could have done no more than I have done, had I known positively that he was in the mine, an unlawful prisoner."

"Are you sure of that?" she asked, almost sternly. "If you knew your own father was in that mine, do you think you could have done no more than you have done?"

Harry hesitated, and she went on, —

"Would you not have had a thousand men at the door of the place to rescue him within an hour?"

Henry wished to tell the truth, so he deliberated.

"No," said he, "no force could reach him before the men who hold him could have time to take the life of the sole witness to their crimes. I could have done no more than I have, I swear to you, even had I believed that my own father was there imprisoned."

Helen asked no more questions, but continued to sob.

"I beg your pardon," she said, at last. "I believe my grief has made me selfish. If you have done all that you can do, I ought to be satisfied, though your reason has not been convinced by what appeared to my weak, bewildered brain, proof as strong as holy writ."

"You feel convinced that your father is in the mine, Miss Graham?"

"I am sure of it, Mr. Stacey. I have not the faintest doubt."

"Then, indeed," he said, "I can understand the depth of your grief. I have not thought that he was there, but, if you will believe me, upon the honor of a man, I have done all that I could do, acting loyally upon the theory that he was there. I have tried to find him and release him; failing in that, I have endeavored not to add to his perils."

"Thank you, Mr. Stacey. I am satisfied, and shall always feel grateful to you for your kindness. I have never felt so dejected as now, for I believe, not only that my father is detained in the mine, but that now his danger is greatly increased by the absence of Mr. Bloodstone."



Harry could say no more than he had said, and so went away.



## CHAPTER XL.

### THE CLOUDS BEGIN TO LIFT

THE lady flung herself into the chair by the window, but not now to look up the street, as if to see her father coming. The casket had been so rudely racked, that even hope had been expelled from its place at the bottom.

"My father will die," cried Helen, "and I shall not know it. Yet will Enoch Bloodstone come back and demand his prey."

For while her father's fate was still in doubt, the girl felt too surely that, resolve as she might, still the man could make his own terms.

"Should he choose to exercise his power by threatening, or by making allusive promises, what could I do? I must yield, or I may destroy my father without knowing it."

While she sat resting her head on the window sill, — not in tears, for the fountains were dry from excessive use, — she heard a gentle tap at the door.

"It was so soft that it must be a child," she thought. Some children had been playing in the hall during the afternoon. "It is one of these little ones paying me a visit."

"Come in," she said.

But the door did not open.

She waited. "The little fellow has made a mistake, and will go on."

But it did not, and after a time a second tap faintly invaded the room. Helen arose and walked to the door, and threw it open. She started back with surprise. Instead of the child she expected to find demanding admission, a tall man stood in the hall, holding his hat respectfully in his hand. His long beard and hair were shaggy and uncombed, his dress was soiled and showed the marks of travel.

Helen did not recognize him at first, but his voice, when he spoke, at once told her who he was.

"Good evening, Colonel Greathouse," she said, extending her hand to him.

Greathouse took the lady's hand and returned her salutation.

She invited him to enter the room, as she had always done, scarcely expecting that he would comply; but he did so, and accepted the seat which she pointed out to him. But, though sitting by her invitation in the lady's presence, he did not appear at ease.

This she observed, and tried to overcome his evident bashfulness. To do this, she questioned him concerning his adventures in the expedition against the savages, from which she knew he had just returned.

Greathouse answered with a modesty that was more the manner of a girl than of a man. It was plain that the lady was an object more formidable to him than a band of hostile Indians would have been. He had come in to ask about herself, and not to relate his own adventures, but he did not know how to begin the inquiry. At last, in a hesitating manner and in a low voice, he spoke.

"I have heard, Miss Graham, some rumors concerning the afflictions that have befallen you, and though it may not become me to touch upon a matter so delicate as that of a daughter's grief, especially when it cannot be removed, yet I feel that a kind word from even one not better known to you than myself, might not be taken as impertinent. I have recently arrived from the Plains; indeed, I have not been in the house above a quarter of an hour. I do not know all that has occurred, but have heard enough to satisfy me that there has been much to grieve you, and that you have suffered enough to entitle you to the sympathy and the aid of every gentleman with whom you meet, whether he be an intimate friend or only a casual acquaintance, like myself."

This had not been said in a rapid, off-hand manner, as we have written it, but at intervals, and with no little hesitation; the speaker appearing to feel his way as he advanced. But it was made without interruption from the lady, save such effect as her sobs, which commenced almost with his first reference to the subject, may have produced. Observing no disposition on her part to speak, he continued,—

"I beg your pardon, Miss Graham, if my offer of condolence

and aid has only added to your grief, instead of assuaging it, as I intended it and hoped it would do."

"Do not believe that it has such an effect, Colonel Greathouse," said Helen, trying to dry her eyes with her handkerchief. "It is the voice of kindness that has brought fresh tears to my eyes, when sorrow could no longer find them. It is your sympathy alone that has affected me."

"Thank you, Miss Graham, for your kindness in saying so. I have heard of the sad death of your mother, but I will not speak of that. Your own heart will, I have no doubt, find, in remembering her goodness when living, quite all of the comfort that can ever be obtained by way of reconciling itself to such a loss. But if report speaks the truth, you have other matters upon your mind, which, I fear, may be more difficult to bear up against, than even death itself."

Helen only answered by continued tears.

"Are my fears without foundation, Miss Graham?"

Again she raised her head and made an effort to be calm.

"You have been told only the truth, Colonel Greathouse. I am, indeed, the victim of very great misfortunes. I am surrounded with a maze of troubles, that I am unable to even see my way to escape from."

"Would it be too much to ask you the nature of the troubles that surround you, Miss Graham?"

"I scarcely feel, Colonel Greathouse, that I can safely tell any one of the condition in which I and those whom I love have been placed by a series of unfortunate events that have been for a long time going on, and are still going on. It is not from any want of faith in you that I say this, but I am so situated that a false step, an unfortunate word from me, may plunge not only myself, — for that I would care nothing, — but those near and dear to me, still deeper into disasters that I dare not even hint the nature of, to you or to any one."

Greathouse deliberated some time, without speaking.

"I came here with the hope that I might be of service to you in some way; I did not come to add to your troubles. If I cannot benefit you, I will not force upon you services not needed, and which might be injurious."

Though he spoke these words with an effort to appear satisfied with the refusal of his offer, his tone was not wholly successful.

Helen detected the disappointment that was but partially concealed.

"I trust that you will forgive me, Colonel Greathouse, and not believe that I reject your offer from any doubt of your zeal. I only doubt the power of any human being to avail me now. One well-meant effort has already been made in my service, and has failed, leaving me in a worse position than before. Another might ruin all."

"Miss Graham, I have this moment arrived from the Indian country, with but little, if any, notion of the cause of your grief; I have heard that you are in very great trouble, that is all. I do not know the extent or character of those troubles. I have no idea how great an undertaking your rescue from them may be; whether it is a work within the range of man's power, or whether God alone can compass it. But if you will pardon me, I will tell you by what right I offer my arm in your service."

Helen had resumed her attitude of dejection, with her face in her handkerchief, and not answering with an objection, Greathouse went on.

✓ "I have lived all my life upon the border, amongst wild and desperate men. It may have been a hard fate that threw me there, but I never felt it to be so, or at least, not till lately. I grew up amongst these men as wild and as desperate as the wildest white man that ever lived upon the Texan frontier. We made our own laws and carried them out ourselves. Our rights were fought for, and our wrongs were remedied on the spot, and by our own hands. This was our civilization. Its justice or its policy as a system I never heard brought into question, till long after I was a man in years and stature.

"A few months ago I saw you, and found that I had a heart. Within a week, I had learned what it was to have a hopeless love. The first, and natural impulse of a man so situated, is to declare his passion, and to offer himself, such as he is, his fortunes and his future, to the lady. I did not do this, as you know. For the first time I examined and saw myself by a new light, reflected upon my heart from your eyes. I found that my life had been a long and fearful mistake; that my past had been a career of violence and blood; and that my future could only be the natural sequel to such a commencement; that the time of learning the arts and the customs of peace, and the civilization which you recognize, had passed away, and that I was but the gnarled and twisted trunk of a dead tree, that the lightning of barbarism had scorched and destroyed. I lingered around you day after day, my heart yearning for the unspeakable joy that a smile from you always gave to it. But

time only added to the absolute certainty that I must live and die without hope. I resolved to tear myself away from you. The news of the great war that is going on had come to us across the land. I knew nothing of the merits of the struggle; many who were around me said that the South was striving to destroy the country it could no longer govern; that it did this in order to perpetuate that baneful system of human slavery, which had made ignorance and hateful prejudice the greatest powers in the land, and sent them stalking up and down the country, putting down and sweeping away all before them. I did not think nor care for this; whether it was true or false no longer concerned me. The sick man cannot be expected to heal himself. I knew that my education did not enable me to cope in civilized struggles with the simplest graduate of the Northern village school. I knew that my habits were the habits of men who pay but little respect to the laws of the land, and who carry on their projects in its face by violence and private force. It might be true that the peculiar system was responsible for my habits and my conduct. That question was not for me to decide. Such as I was, I was satisfied with. The people who had made me so were my own people, and all they had done for themselves they had done for me. My kindred were now in trouble and claimed my aid; my heart was with them. I only knew that they were struggling against overwhelming odds; that the land of my childhood was invaded by the stranger; that the iron heel of the Northern soldier, pressed and trampled upon the green spots of my infancy. I cared nothing for the causes of the war; it was enough that a wail of anguish and despair came up from the widows and orphans of my kindred and my friends. Before I saw you, I had thought of all this. When I first met you, I had been to California to sell my property before going away to join the Confederate army. Your arrival detained me for a time. But when the hopelessness of my suit grew and settled upon me, I again renewed my plans. I was upon the point of departing, when something which I saw convinced me that your course was not to be free from cares and troubles. I believed that the time was not distant when you would be in need of assistance, that some resolute heart and steady arm could alone give you. Miss Graham, I remained in the Territory. I postponed my departure to the place whither I believe my duty called me, in the ranks of my people's defenders, in order to be at your side when your hour of extreme peril should come. I am here now,

instead of being upon the Rio Grande, or the Mississippi, because of that circumstance alone. If you dismiss me, it will be but to tell me to go forward upon my journey to that land. If you detain me, it will be to serve you to the extent of my power, and when you shall need me no longer, to turn my face to my duty in the South. I ask you for the privilege of serving you, not as a suitor for your hand, not as one having hope, not as one deeming himself fit to be more to you than he now is, but as a man who has had but few opportunities of doing good, who believes that the noblest thing he can do—as it would be the happiest—would be to lay down his life in your service. I ask you not to let me live, but to let me die for you, that is all."

Long before Greathouse had finished, Helen raised her head, and listened to him more and more attentively, as he continued. When he had finished she spoke.

"Colonel Greathouse, you cannot assist me. Of that I am sure. None can do it, save God alone. He will, if it be in accordance with his divine plan. If he does not will it, I can only submit to the decrees of Providence. It does not become me to doubt His wisdom or goodness. But I cannot dispute your claim to my confidence longer. What the public knows of my sorrows I presume you also have heard. What it does not know I will tell you. My father disappeared from his home one week before my mother's death. Word came to us, no matter how, that he had fled from the country to avoid his debts. It was the shock produced by his extraordinary conduct that killed my poor mother. I know now that he did not fly from the country, nor even from this town. That circumstance is the reason of my grief. My father, at this moment, is detained by force at the bottom of his own mine. He is there, either living a miserable prisoner, or perhaps dying an agonizing death from starvation and cold."

At this point Helen's manner had changed; she had risen from her seat; her voice had assumed a tone of lofty denunciation. She looked like some queen driven from the home of her ancestors, now standing forth to summon her people to the rescue. Greathouse looked at her with admiration.

"Why has he not been rescued?" cried he.

Here her voice again fell.

"No one believes my story. Only one man knows my father to be there, and he is the one who holds him."

"I will try to get him out, if you will let me," said Greathouse, in an even and modest tone.

"It is impossible," she said, "one effort has been made, an honest effort, I am sure, but it failed, and may have added to my father's peril."

Greathouse could say no more than he had said. His offer had not been made in a boastful manner, but it had conveyed all that a determined and resolute man can convey, by the use of words alone. It had said plainly enough, though the language used was simple and the tone low, and Helen had so understood it.

"I am no empty boaster. I will try to release your father, and my effort shall be no child's play. I will go as a man goes who lays his life upon the stake. I will release him though I die in the effort."

Having expressed this by his manner, if not by his words, there was nothing more to add.

The two sat in silence for a time, when at last Helen spoke.

"Colonel Greathouse, forty-eight hours ago, I told a man, whose name you will not ask me to mention, that if he would bring my father to me living, he might fetch at the same time with him a minister of the gospel, and that I would marry him upon the spot. If he does it, I will keep my word; and yet that man is not worthy to be a menial servant to you, and does not even pretend to love me. You say that you love me, and I do not doubt it. Colonel Greathouse, I hope you will not think that I have forgotten the modesty that ought from my sex to be part of my nature, but if my poor hand, which is all that I have left, will add to your zeal in my service, I will gladly, joyously, make you the same offer."

Greathouse sprang to his feet at hearing this; then he suddenly sat down again, as if ashamed of the burst of excitement that had caused him to forget himself.

"I will try, Miss Graham, to release your father, and I thank you for the compliment your offer contains. I never hoped to hear you speak of marriage to me, it is almost more than I can quite understand. The prize is so splendid, that it takes away my nerve. I almost fear that I cannot play my part so well, now that I have something to live for. But, Miss Graham, I will try, and what is more, I will begin now," and he rose to take his leave. "Are there any facts or circumstances besides what you have already told me, that I ought to know, that may assist me in the enterprise?"

"Nothing, Colonel Greathouse. I have told you all that I know myself. I simply believe that my father is detained in

the mine. If I am correct in my notion, it follows that he is detained by the persons in charge of the mine. Who they are, you will easily learn upon inquiry, if you do not know already. There is one thing that I have already suggested, and will again repeat. An unsuccessful effort may result in my father's death; it may cause his captors to murder him for their own security. But that you will understand as well, or better, than I can explain to you. I can give you no advice, but I can aid you with a daughter's prayers for the rescue of her father from a cruel and undeserved fate.

"Miss Graham, I will bid you farewell. If I fail in this enterprise, it will not be because of any faint-heartedness in your service. I say this now, because I shall not have the opportunity of saying it hereafter. If you ever see Robert Greathouse after to-day, it will be with your father walking at his side, and he will have to relate the details of a success, and not to apologise for a miscarriage. Good-by."

Helen sank upon her knees once more, in prayer for Heavenly aid, and there remained till long after his departing footsteps had died away in the hall.

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## CHAPTER XLI.

### JACK GOWDY'S LOGIC.

WHEN Greathouse left No. 16, he made his way directly to the street, but before he had gone far, he heard some one behind him, calling his name loudly. It proved to be Jack Gowdy, who came running after him. The stage-driver had just driven up to the door of the American Eagle Hotel, and seeing his friend pass out, shouted his name. That not proving sufficient to attract his attention, he jumped from the box, leaving his horses standing in the street, and pursued and stopped him.

"Are you deaf?" cried Jack, "or have you been killing so many Indians that laurels have put you above speaking to your old friends?"

"Neither," said Greathouse, turning and shaking hands



heartily with the other. "How do you do, Gowdy? I am glad to see you, for I have something special to say to you."

"That is just my hand," said Jack. "I have been wanting you back here for a month. Everything has gone wrong since you went away, and it was high time for you to come home, and put matters straight again. Wait just half a minute, till I tell one of the boys to look after my team, and I will go with you."

The two men turned and walked back to the hotel. Jack soon had a man in his place, and the empty coach was rattling away round the corner, in the direction of the stables.

"Now come to my room," said Greathouse, "where we can be alone."

When they were seated Greathouse spoke first.

"You said that things had gone wrong since I was away Jack. What has gone wrong?"

"Everything, Bob; especially with the Grahams. You never saw anything like the time they have had. Enough troubles fell in on them in one week to satisfy any reasonable family for a whole life-time. In the first place, old Graham's creditors got after him too sharp, and he ran away to Salt Lake. That was too much for the old woman; she couldn't stand it; so, in about a week, she handed in her checks and quit. But that's not half. About the time we got her planted in the gravel, it turned out that the old man had not run away after all; but was down in his own mine all the time."

"What is he doing in the mine, Jack?"

"Staying there, I suppose. There can't be much else to do, in such a place. It is full of choke-damps, so he can't be staying there for the pure fun of the thing."

"I don't mean that," said Bob, impatiently. "Who keeps him there?"

"That fellow Bloodstone keeps him there, of course," said the stage-driver. "The superintendent."

"What does he do it for, Jack? What reason has he for detaining Mr. Graham?" asked Greathouse, sharply.

Jack looked at the questioner with a puzzled expression. "Why, he is the superintendent of the mine, I tell you." But seeing that Greathouse was not satisfied with this explanation, he went on to put the matter in a clearer light. "What reason has a mining superintendent for stealing anything that he can lay his hands on? I suppose he wanted him. He stole everything old Graham had, and then he was obliged to steal the old man himself."

Greathouse still looked perplexed, and Jack felt called upon to make further suggestion.

"Perhaps he does it to keep his hand in ; he may be afraid that he will forget how to steal, and so unfit himself for the management of mining property. He will steal the daughter next, I suppose, and then he will go and be superintendent of another mine. That's the way they always do in this country."

Jack having now put the matter of motive in a satisfactory light, waited with a triumphant air for further questions.

"Are you quite sure, Jack, that Mr. Graham is in the mine?"

"Sure of it, Bob? Well, I should say that I was. I am as sure of it as I am that we two gentlemen are sitting here at this moment in conversation."

"Why are you sure of it?"

Jack was confused by this question. He looked vaguely at the ceiling and then at the floor. He took off his hat, and fiercely scratched the back of his head; then he put his hat on again with a violent jerk, and pulled it off as quick, followed by more scratching, as if he had a notion that an idea was unlawfully concealing itself somewhere in his hair, much as a rabbit hides in a pile of straw, and that by this energetic measure he could force it to break cover.

"What reason have you for thinking that Mr. Graham is kept in the mine by his superintendent?" repeated Greathouse.

This question, put with more impatience than before, produced the same effect that Jack's head-scratching had failed to do. It started the lurking idea from its hiding place.

"Affidavits," said Jack, confidently, "I have seen affidavits to that effect. Sworn testimony, Bob. When you see affidavits of a thing, you believe it, don't you?"

"That depends, Jack, upon who makes them. I have seen affidavits that I thought did not make a case any stronger, and I have seen some that did. There is a great difference in affidavits, Jack."

"Of course there is, Bob; I know that as well as any gentleman in the world can know it. I don't pretend to be a scientific man, but I know that much as well as anybody can tell me; but I don't mean to say that I believe it because I have seen the affidavits of unreliable people. I don't think anything more of the oath of a mining director, or a Methodist preacher, or an abolitionist school-master, or any other sneak, than you do, Bob. I refer to the affidavit of a gentleman, and as ele-

gant a gentleman as walks on the top of the earth to-day. I have seen an affidavit that such a gentleman as that spent a whole evening swearing up to the mark. Now are you satisfied?" And Jack threw himself back in his chair with an air that said plainly, "that point is at last disposed of, and thoroughly established."

Bob, however, still looked doubtingly at his friend. "Who was the gentleman, Jack?"

The stage-driver gave a start at this question, that clearly indicated impatience. His face wore an injured expression. A personal wrong was being put upon him; his countenance appeared to say, "Where is this thing to stop?"

"What's the odds, Bob," he said at last, "who he was? You have my word that he is as reliable a gentleman as can be found in the Territory. What more do you want?"

"I would like to know his name, Jack, if only from curiosity. If he is the sort of person you say he is, I am content."

Jack's face lighted up. "If I tell you his name, Bob, and he proves, as I know he will prove, to be an elegant, high-toned gentleman, one whose character is above suspicion, will you be satisfied?"

"Of course I will, Jack. That is all I ask."

"Well," said Jack, settling back in his chair and putting his hat on with a determined smack that sent it down almost over his ears, "that is my hand. I swore to them documents myself. I am the gentleman. I swore to them without interruption from nine o'clock in the evening till it was time for me to start over the mountains next morning, and pretty rough work it was, I can tell you."

This statement of Jack's about the time engaged in the jury process was wholly imaginary and based upon what his intentions had been and what he had stood ready and willing to do, if required. He felt that as he was prepared to do so much swearing, there was no reason why he should not have the credit of having actually performed the task.

"Now, Bob, I hope you are satisfied. When you ask me, do I believe that old Graham is in the mine, I say to you that after all that rough swearing it was about time for me to commence having some pretty decided notions on the subject. If I am ever going to believe he is there, then that time must have come. Would you not say so, Bob?"

"Yes, Jack, I should say that it had."

"Well, Bob, that time has come. It came the minute I

heard he was in the mine. I was ready to swear to it then, though I had not then half the reasons for knowing it that I now have."

"What fresh reasons have you now, Jack, for knowing it?"

"Millions of them, Bob; millions. I could not tell them all to you in a week; no, not in a year."

"What is your chief reason for thinking him there?"

"My chief reason, Bob," and here Jack re-commenced the demonstrations upon his hair, looking to the forcing of another concealed idea from cover, "because," said he at last with a burst of triumph, "if he is not there, then where in hell is he? Can you answer me that question, Bob Greathouse? If you can't, I take it for granted, between gentlemen, you will hand in your checks and quit the game. You can't answer it, sir. No man can. Because why? They can't give any answer. If he is not in the mine, then they can't tell where he is, and no man can tell."

"Suppose he is in Salt Lake, Jack."

"But I tell you he is not in Salt Lake, Bob; he can't be in Salt Lake."

"Why not, Jack?"

"Because he can't, Bob."

"But why can't he, Jack?"

Jack looked as if discouraged with the stupidity of his friend. "I have told you why more than twenty times already, and you don't seem to understand it. I will tell you again, and see if I can get it through your head. He can't be in Salt Lake, because he is in the mine. A man can't be in two different places at the same time, can he? You just answer me that question."

"No one said he could, Jack; but how do you know he is in the mine?"

Jack was now losing his temper.

"You want me to explain that to you again, do you, Bob? Well I will do it, and then I am done. In the first place, to go over the ground again, if he is not in the mine, where in hell is he? In the second place, I have sworn that he is in the mine for more than two hours on a stretch, and I consider my oath as good as the oath of any other white man that ever walked on the top of the earth, I don't care a continental damn where the next one comes from. I think these two reasons ought to be sufficient for any gentleman who pretends to call himself my friend. But I have others."

Here he looked at Bob reproachfully.

"After I had made them affidavits, I heard that there were some people who felt disposed to doubt the truth of what I had sworn to. Well, what did I do? I hope I did what is expected of a gentleman. I generally try to do that as well as I know how. I took a friend with me, as elegant a gentleman as ever chewed fine-cut, though he does drive an ox-team for a living. A gentleman," and here he looked with cold severity at Greathouse, who had by implication questioned his oath, "a gentleman, I say, who does not require the whys and the wherefores for every statement a friend makes to him. I took that gentleman—Joseph Bowers, Esquire, is his name—with me. I sent another driver over the mountains with my coach, and this gentleman, my friend, turned his oxen out upon the grass; we loaded our fire-arms and we paraded the town of Virginia City for two days, steadily inquiring into the facts of the case. We asked everybody we met what they thought of them affidavits and what was their private opinion of the conduct of John Gowdy in making 'em. Did we find anybody that questioned their truth? No, sir, we didn't. We did not meet anything in the shape of a man knee high to a grasshopper that did not believe, religiously, that Mr. Graham was in the mine. And more, every one of them said that if I should meet the thieving scoundrel, Bloodstone, and scalp him, I would do a good service to the country, and they would be glad of it. Now, Bob, if Mr. Graham is not in the mine, why did not some of them people say so? Everybody can't be wrong, can they?"

"No, I should say they could not, Jack," said Bob, who was now satisfied that, whether his friend was right or wrong in his opinion, at least no new light could be thrown by him upon the subject of Mr. Graham's absence. "But," he continued, "why have you not got the gentleman out before this time?"

"Why," cried Jack, "because I have been waiting for you to come home. There is nobody else in the country that can be depended upon. Joe Bowers means well enough; his will is good; but what can you expect of an ox-driver, and especially one that has been crossed in love, as Joe has? He is like a horse that don't have his oats; he may mean well enough, but you can't get the speed on him. Joe can't get over enough ground. It would take him a whole day to go from here up to the Graham mine, to say nothing about taking anybody out of it after he got there. He cannot understand that he has not his cattle along with him all the time. He moves at the pace

his oxen go with a great load of silver rock behind them, and he keeps halting for them to catch up with him. If we should start up there early in the morning to take the old gentleman out of the hole, we would be obliged to camp out on the road the first night, for we would not get there that day. I knew this, and the first time I got Joe up to the mine, I left him close by the shaft and told him to wait there for me till I should come back. I said, 'Joe, watch the place sharp and remember everything that occurs, so as to tell me. Keep your eye skinned, Joe,' said I, 'for a couple of hours, and by that time I will be back here with you.' That was a week ago. Since that I have been over the mountains two trips and back again, and I will bet a thousand dollars to a paper of 'fine-cut' that Joe Bowers don't think I have been away more than twenty minutes. He runs at a lower speed than any other gentleman ever did go, though that other may have been an ox-driver himself, unless he has been crossed in love, and then I can't say about him. But this I will say for Joseph Bowers, he is reliable. When we go to that mine, if it is a year from now, we will find him on the ground. He will never break camp till I come back to him. Joe Bowers can wait longer than any man in the world."

"What are your plans, Jack?" inquired Bob. "How do you propose to proceed in effecting Mr. Graham's release?"

"My plans, Bob? I have no plans. If I had had plans, I would have had the old man out before now. It was just because I had no plans that I waited for you to come back. I will do anything that you say, and so will Joe Bowers if it don't require too high a rate of speed. Joe is as reliable a man as any you can find, if you will only not forget that he is an ox-driver. Start him in time, that's all. Let him go to the place the day before you intend to commence, and Joe will never fail you; but that is not necessary now, for he is already on the ground, and will be there whenever we come."

"There is no doubt, Jack, that your friend Bowers is already well placed; let him stay where he is. But have you thought of no way to go about the matter?"

"Yes, Bob, I have thought of a good many ways, but none of them seemed to come to much. Joe Bowers, who has more sense than you would expect to find in an ox-driver, especially one that has been crossed in love, persuaded me out of several of my plans. At one time I thought of setting fire to the hoisting sheds, and burning the thieves out of it like a nest of

rats. My plan was to set fire to the shed in the night, and then stand outside and shoot the scoundrels as they would run out. But Joe said that in that way we would burn up poor Mr. Graham in the bottom of the mine ; so that and several other plans were dropped, as not being, upon the whole, feasible. At last I left Joe, as I have told you, to watch the place till you should get back. Joe is as much interested in the matter as any of us, and he will stay there. His oxen wanted to go on to the grass for a few weeks anyhow, so he said, and as nothing could be done till you came, I went back to my coach and left him watching the mine. But now you are come, I am ready to do anything you say. You know all about the matter now as well as I do."

Bob mused for a time.

"Jack," said he, at last, "it must be Bloodstone who is keeping the old gentleman down there."

"Oh, yes, of course it is, Bob ; I know that perfectly well. That was in my affidavit. I swore to that as much as half an hour."

"Yes, I understand," said Bob, interrupting him impatiently. "So if Bloodstone has him, we must see Bloodstone first. Perhaps we might induce him, in some way, to allow the old gentleman to come out. He can't be very anxious to keep him. With a few kind words, he might be persuaded to release him. Who stays at the mine, Jack ? Could we get in there to do anything ?"

"No, Bob, that is the great difficulty. The place is barricaded like a fortress ; then they never open the door to anybody without first looking carefully at them, through the peep-holes, to see if it is safe to do so. They keep three or four fellows in the shed all the time, and the door is as strong as wood, and iron, and locks, and bars can make it. You can't get in till they are ready to let you in, and then it would be too late to do any good"

"You are right, Jack. We must see Bloodstone and talk to him. We must try moral force. We must argue the point with him. We must show him how wrong it is to keep an old gentleman away from his family. I think a little reason, properly offered to him, will fetch him around. Where is he ? — at the office, or at the mine ?"

"That is the worst of it, Bob ; he has gone over the mountains, to be gone two or three weeks. I took him over yesterday when I went. I did not go all the way, but came back

from Strawberry, to accommodate another driver. The superintendent went on to San Francisco. He was with a fellow of the name of Withergreen, another vagabond, a good deal like himself. They run together lately, and are like a pair of twins. I would have been glad of a chance to throw them both over the bank. A greater pair of scoundrels never cheated the gallows."

"Bloodstone gone to San Francisco!" cried Greathouse, in amazement. "That is a new difficulty. I do not believe anything can be done without his consent. These fellows will lock themselves up so tight that we could not get a word into their ears, do what we may. There is no use in trying to reason with the hired men, even if we could get to them, which we can't. Bloodstone is the man to talk to; there no mistake can be made. You are sure he has gone to the Bay?" he asked, rising up and pacing the room.

"Dead sure, Bob; I took him as far as Strawberry myself. There can't be any sort of doubt about it. Both he and Withergreen went over together. I noticed it, because Joe Bowers saw Withergreen come out of the Graham mine the day before with Bloodstone, and told me of it. That made me notice Withergreen more particularly, and they kept together close all the time, and talked very confidentially. I could not hear anything they said. They rode inside. I had talked about scalping Bloodstone, and so he gave me a rather wide berth. I remembered what Joe said about their coming out of the mine together."

"That is important, Jack. Did you hear how long that man Withergreen was to be gone?"

"Yes; I heard him tell another passenger, as we drove away from here, that he would not be over here again for a month or so."

Bob continued his walk, without speaking, for ten minutes, the stage-driver watching him all the while anxiously, but with a look of complete confidence plainly expressed in his countenance. At last he paused.

"Jack," said he, "do you go over to-morrow?"

"Not unless you wish me to do so, Bob. My coach goes, but I am booked for this business now, till it is done, and I am under command of my superior officer, Colonel Greathouse. If you wish me to go, I go; if you wish me to stay here, say the word, and I stay."

Again Greathouse resumed his walk.



"Jack," said he, "nothing can be done without the consent of this man, Bloodstone. He has evidently got Mr. Graham in his power for some reason, and I cannot imagine what. Any movement here will be sure to fail. We shall either get hold of the wrong man, that is, talk to some fellow that knows nothing about the business, while the real party who has Mr. Graham in charge will get frightened and strangle him. You see, Jack, every man of them knows full well that if Mr. Graham should be found in that mine, their lives would not be worth ten minutes' purchase. A mob of miners would hang them to a man. It is of no use to go after these underlings. We must commence at the head, or we shall never accomplish anything. Don't you think so, Jack?"

"Do I think so, Bob? I don't think nothing about it, I know we must. Of course that is the way to do; any child would know that without being told."

"Well, I am glad, Jack, that the idea meets with your approbation. My plan is to go to Mr. Bloodstone, in San Francisco, and talk to him at once. If he can't be induced to let the old man go, then we must try some other scheme. But I don't believe any plan can succeed that does not provide for the full consent of Mr. Bloodstone to be obtained. He must be convinced that it is greatly to his interest to release his prisoner. If we can't do that, we will fail. He holds the winning cards in his hands, and it must be made plain, and decidedly to his interest, to let go his hold. As the game now stands, the United States army, and the Confederate army at its back, could not get Mr. Graham out of that mine alive. If Bloodstone can be induced to consent, you and your friend, Joe Bowers, with a little help from me, can manage the whole affair."

"Thank you, old fellow," cried Jack, springing up and catching his friend's hand, and shaking it heartily, "you have taken a load from my mind. I can't imagine just what argument you can offer to such an infernal scoundrel as Bloodstone is, but you must work that out. Coin is the best thing to offer him, but that is just what we have not much of. All I have you are welcome to, and all I can borrow or steal, if I get a reasonable chance at anybody's bank. But all of these things are matters of detail that you, Bob, must attend to. As for my part of the work, only just tell me what I am to do, that is all I ask. But don't tell me too much at a time, for I am afraid I might forget something just at the critical moment, and cause

everything to go wrong. When you want anything done, tell me ten seconds in advance. That is as long as I want to know it, and then you can count on me. If you want Joe Bowers to do anything, I will run right up to the mine and tell him now, so that he will have a day to prepare himself."

"Nothing, Jack. Let Joe Bowers stay just where he is. He is well placed now, without any change. Perhaps you might go up and tell him to stay by the mine until you come back, and to go on as he is doing."

"Not at all!" cried Jack. "It is not necessary to tell Joe to wait. Waiting is Joe's strong suit; he's always ready to do that. But if you want to move him, that will require a special command, that is all. We will find him at his post when we are ready for him, without any fresh instructions."

"Very well, Jack, then that is settled. To-morrow we go over the mountains on your coach. I am going directly to San Francisco to talk with Mr. Bloodstone. I am going to see if he cannot be induced to let the poor old gentleman, who can be of no possible use to him, come out of the mine and go about his business. I have done some very hard travelling within the last three days, Jack, and I have not slept a single instant within that time, so call for me in the morning, and save me a place on the box with you. Now that all is agreed upon, I will go to bed."

"All right, Colonel," cried the stage-driver. "I will be down upon you by four o'clock. You will not get more than forty winks of sleep before we start."

"Good-night, Jack"; and the two men separated.

## CHAPTER XLII.

## A PRIVATE WRIT OF HABEAS CORPUS.

"Dick ! Dick ! have you answered the bell in No. 698?"

"Yes, sir."

"What does the gentleman want?"

"He don't like his room, sir. Says it is too high up. He is afraid of earthquakes, sir. Says he sleeps very sound, and that if the house should be shaken down in the night he is afraid he wouldn't get out with his baggage."

"Afraid of earthquakes, is he? Does he think any respectable earthquake would take up its time with such a Washoe bushwhacker as he is? Why in hell don't he sleep in the street? May be that would be safe enough to suit him. Does he want to be put in the cellar, where they will have to dig him out?"

"No, sir. He says he wants a room on the first floor, where he can get out himself before the house falls down. He don't want to trouble anybody to dig him out. Says he would rather walk out, if it is all the same."

"Humph ! he is very modest. That is always the way with these mountaineers. They are so used to sleeping in the open air that when they get into a comfortable bed they don't know what to make of it. Clean sheets give 'em the nightmare and they think the house has fallen down on them. Dick !"

"Yes, sir."

"Tell the gentleman that he can have No. 42, if he wants to pay for it. But it takes coin. He must take the whole suit ; they go together, and are ten dollars a day."

"Yes, sir. The gentleman says, sir, that he don't care anything about the price. He is only anxious about the safety of himself and his baggage. He don't want to be smashed, he says, because he is not used to it. Another time when he is more accustomed to the ways of the place he will not object, but at present he wants to be excused. He don't care for coin. He says that he has got so much now that he don't know what to do with it. He says he is obliged to throw some of it out of the window every morning just to reduce his stock."

"Humph! he does, does he? I'll bet high he has strings tied to it and hauls it in again. That is generally the way with fellows that throw their money about so free. Very well, Dick, if he is so much troubled with coin, show him No. 42. He won't have much to pitch out of the window of that room if he pays his bills regularly."

"All right, sir!"

This conversation took place between the clerk of the Cosmodental Hotel at San Francisco, and one of the bell-boys. A stranger had arrived by the Sacramento steamer in the evening, and had registered his name as Colonel Robert Greathouse, of Washoe, and called for a good, large, comfortable room, to be situated very low down.

"All right, Colonel Greathouse," said the obliging clerk, reading his name over his shoulder, "we can accommodate you, sir. We have just the room you want for all the world. Dick! Dick!"

"Sir."

"Show Colonel Greathouse to 698."

"Yes, sir."

"And be spry about it. Do you hear?"

"Yes, sir."

"And, Dick, take Colonel Greathouse's carpet-bag."

"Yes, sir."

"And a candle, Dick. Do you hear?"

"Yes, sir. Yes, sir."

And so Colonel Greathouse had followed the boy up flight after flight of stairs till he came to 698, the last room of the last floor next to the roof. Here Dick set down the Colonel's baggage and candle, and, under pretence of stepping out for a moment, scampered away down stairs as fast as his legs could carry him.

"This countryman will not be satisfied with this room," he thought. "Nobody is ever satisfied with No. 698, though we fetch all countrymen here the first night and try them with it. They generally sleep in it one night before they learn the use of the bell rope. Countrymen have an idea that the only way to give an order in a hotel is to go all the way down to the office and see the proprietor, and tell him personally what they want. I wish everybody in the house were countrymen. It would be much easier on the bell-ropes and on the boys. Especially on the boys."

So Dick vanished as quickly as possible, hoping to hear no

more from 698, at least till the next morning. But before he reached the ground floor the bell of 698 was ringing furiously, and Mr. Dick was obliged, most reluctantly, to ascend again to the top of the house. This countryman had proved an exception to the rule, and tugged away at the bell as if he had been a professional bell-ringer. Upon Dick's return again to the office the foregoing conversation took place.

Greathouse was shown down to the first floor and into No. 42.

"This is a nice room," said Dick, "but it is a little expensive."

"What is the price?" asked the mountaineer.

"Ten dollars a night, sir. But, you know, this is one of our finest family rooms; and in case of earthquakes, you could easily reach the street before the house could fall."

The stranger mused a moment, as if considering the price and comparing the amount of money with its relative exemption from peril.

"It is regular earthquake proof, sir," suggested Dick, seeing the gentleman hesitate. "You could not shake it down with a dozen earthquakes. Indeed it has been tried, sir." ✓

Dick did not want to go up stairs again.

"Boy," said the stranger, without noticing Dick's hints about the qualities of the apartment, "does a gentleman named Bloodstone live in this house?"

"Yes, sir, he does. He is a great friend of Mr. Withergreen, and came down with him only a day or two ago. Indeed, sir, they live on this floor and close by this very room."

"Ah! do they, indeed? You say you are quite confident that if I take this room, and there should be a shake, that I could get out in time?"

"Oh, quite sure, sir. This is the safest room in the whole house."

"Hem!" said the stranger, considering. "Could I get away with my baggage, do you think?"

The boy looked at the little carpet bag sitting modestly by the door, with a patronizing smile. It was the ordinary outfit of a traveller in the mountains, containing only a shirt collar and an extra pair of pistols.

"Oh, yes, sir! I am quite sure you could, sir."

"Very well, boy. I don't wish to be pulverized the first time I come to your town, so I will take the place. Ten dollars a night, heigh! Well, I shan't stay long. I am going away to-

morrow at four o'clock ; and, to save any more trouble, I will pay now. Here are ten dollars. Oblige me by taking them to the office and fetching me my bill receipted."

"There is no need of it, sir," said the boy, "gentlemen are never expected to pay in advance here."

"But I wish to do it ; for I am so sleepy that I may not get up till just time to go to the steamer. In such case, if I pay now, I will not be detained then."

The boy took the money, and went to the office.

"No. 698 takes No. 42, sir, at ten dollars a night. He is going to sleep till time to go away to-morrow, and wants to pay his bill now, and have no more trouble."

"He does, does he ? What a prompt cuss he is, to be sure. Perhaps he is afraid an earthquake may drive him out, and deprive him of the luxury of paying. Very good ! I wish they were all as prompt. Here is the gentleman's bill receipted. Run along with it ; and don't stop lounging in the halls as you go. Do you hear ?"

"Yes, sir."

But the boy answered his "yes, sir," almost from the top of the stairs, on his way to No. 42.

"Here is your bill, sir, all regularly receipted. Shall I call you, sir, in time for the steamer, to-morrow ?"

"No, I will get up myself without being called. I say, boy ! what is the number of Mr. Bloodstone's room ?"

"Oh, sir, it is quite close by. It is only No. 47, sir. Here it is, just across the hall ; and beyond it is Mr. Withergreen's room, No. 78. They are great friends, you know."

"Thank you, boy. Good-night."

When the boy had gone, Colonel Greathouse stepped out of his door, and walked directly over to No. 47, and knocked without hesitation. There was no answer, and he knocked a second time. Still receiving no response, he opened the door and looked in. The room was empty. The light from the gas-jet in the hall showed that it was not permanently vacant. A pair of slippers set by the bed, and a carpet bag in the corner of the room, stood open, as if in constant use. On the end of it was printed in plain letters, "Enoch Bloodstone." "There can be no mistake," said Greathouse. "This is the right place at last. The gentleman will no doubt be in soon." This said, he closed the door cautiously, and retired to the parlor of No. 42. But he appeared to have entirely forgotten the statement he had made to the bell-boy, about his being so

much in need of sleep, for he made no movement toward seeking his bed. On the contrary, nothing appeared to be farther from his thoughts than an intention to sleep. He turned down the gas so low that the room was quite dark, as if studying a point of thrift for the benefit of the hotel proprietor. Then he drew a chair to the side of the door looking into the hall, which he placed slightly ajar, leaving an aperture of half an inch. Here he took his seat, in such a position that he could watch the hall and the door of No. 47. He was awaiting the return of Mr. Bloodstone.

It was already quite midnight before Greathouse was settled in No 42 ; and if the gentleman for whom he was waiting was at all of regular habits, he might be expected to arrive at any moment. But it was clear that he was not, for one o'clock, and then two o'clock, and at last daylight crept regularly along, and still the stranger sat patiently listening, and watching, at the crack in the parlor door. His eyes never closed the livelong night, but like a statue of brass he looked without moving, without winking, towards the one spot of interest.

By ten o'clock, the halls began to be filled with bustling servants and hurrying guests. Doors opened all along, and meek looking gentlemen in sober black, solemn and subdued, with ladies dressed in breakfast costume, some in linen, neat and crisp, and more in flaunting silk, garish and greasy, floated out into the hall, where they eddied about for a time in the passages and corners, till caught up by the hungry stream, and then drifted away in bobbing and chattering flotilla, to be swallowed up in the roaring breakfast-room, that, like a remorseless Niagara, wailed for them below. All the world was hungry, save the watcher at the door of No. 42. He alone required neither food nor rest. So eleven o'clock came along and no change. "Mr. Bloodstone must have left the town," thought, and even muttered, the bronze sentinel over against his gate. And now the sleepless man began to show signs of a change in temper. He no longer sat as still as at first, and his face began to grow haggard and more pale. His hands, which had all night long been buried deep in the pockets of his sack-coat, would at times be brought forth with a convulsive movement, and passed across his eyes, as if to clear away some obstruction to his vision: When they came forth, they were not open and swinging, but were clenched into the form of fists. The lines on his face were deeper and more marked than before, and his feet could no longer remain still, but would insist upon striking the floor, at times

fiercely. He was growing impatient. The gentleman for whom he was waiting was staying out so late, that even his endurance was being put to a severe test. At twelve o'clock his face brightened for a moment, and then took on a perplexed look. Two gentlemen walked along the hall, towards No. 47. One of them was Mr. Enoch Bloodstone, and the other was Mr. Marvin Withergreen. They did not separate at Bloodstone's door, but both entered it. The watcher hesitated. He had evidently found something more than he had searched for. For two more mortal hours he waited for Mr. Withergreen to come out of Bloodstone's room. But in vain. His business must be important and lengthy. At last the watcher looked at the time again, a thing he had done every ten minutes all night and day. It was after two o'clock, and he had only taken No. 42 for one day, and he desired to go away by the steamer at four. He arose with a look that showed him to have come to a decision.

"I can't wait any longer," he muttered, "I must talk to them both together," and, so saying, he stepped into the hall, and carefully closed the door after him. In another instant he was at No. 47. He knocked, but did not wait to be invited to enter. He turned the knob and walked in, closing the door again.

"Good morning, gentlemen," he said, politely addressing the inmates of the room, who were sitting talking in a confidential manner near the bed. Both of them started at the intrusion, but returned his salute.

"You remember me, I suppose, gentlemen. I am Colonel Greathouse, of Washoe. You, Mr. Withergreen, once invited me to call and see you, when I should come this way. Indeed, I have your card in my pocket at this moment."

Mr. Withergreen acknowledged the fact, and was glad to see Colonel Greathouse. "But," he added, "this is not my apartment where we now are. I would be glad to see Colonel Greathouse in my own apartment, No. 78, on the same floor, at any time when he is at leisure to call."

This was said in a tone, and with a manner, intended to dismiss the intruder. But it failed.

"Yes, I understand that, Mr. Withergreen; I was aware of the ownership of the room. But I have a few words to say to Mr. Bloodstone, which, until this moment, I intended to say to him privately."

"Indeed," cried Mr. Withergreen, "in that case I will step out and leave you to talk to him."



Here the president of the Pactolus made a movement to carry his promise into effect.

"No," said Greathouse, stepping backwards to the door and putting his shoulders against it. "What I was going to say to Mr. Bloodstone in private, I have now concluded to say to you both together. Gentlemen, I can say all that I have to say to you two in about ten minutes. If you will listen to me attentively, perhaps I may be able to do it in five; but it all depends upon how attentive you both are."

Both the gentlemen stood up and commenced saying something about being engaged with important matters at that moment, and would like to defer Colonel Greathouse's business for an hour or so, or until evening.

"You both have, I am quite sure, gentlemen, much important business to occupy your time. All San Francisco people are overrun with business, I am told. But I have come a great distance to say my little speech to you, and I also am pressed for time. If I am to be listened to at all, gentlemen, I must be listened to now," and here he dropped his voice to a tone lower and more even than any he had used before, and continued, "I am going to be listened to now, and it will be better for all of us, you and myself as well, if you understand that at once."

Here he took his right hand from his side pocket, and turned the key in the lock, and, removing it, dropped it into the pocket from which he had taken his hand. When it fell the two gentlemen observed that it gave forth a ringing sound, suggestive that it had struck against some substance of a metallic nature already there.

"What does this mean, Colonel Greathouse," demanded Withergreen, for Bloodstone, pale as a ghost, was already speechless.

"It means," said Greathouse, in a voice, if possibly still lower and more determined, "that I have a few words to say to you two, and that I am going to say them now. I am, gentlemen, going to say them to you here on this spot. I have come a long distance to talk to you, and have not much time to lose. I don't want to be interrupted, and I am not going to be interrupted. Such being the fact, it is only just to you both to tell you precisely what I am going to do. I am going to ask you two gentlemen to resume your seats where you were sitting when I came in. When that is done, I am going to ask you to give me your undivided and silent attention, to what I am going to say for about ten minutes. If you do not do as I ask you,

if you refuse, if you get up from your chairs, if you offer or attempt to leave the room, or to call the attention of anybody by so much as a motion or a sound ; then I am going to send a bullet through each of your gizzards," and here he withdrew his hands from his coat pockets, and showed in each an enormous Derringer pistol, loaded and cocked, while he held a forefinger upon the trigger of each, "and when the bullets have come out of your two backs, as they will, there will be very little of either of you left, except the holes that I will make in your two carcasses. Now gentlemen, do you understand what Bob Greathouse intends to do?"

Here he stuck the pistols straight at the two. They were already at full cock, as both could see only too plainly. Neither spoke. And after a pause of half a minute, Greathouse continued, —

"Very well, then, sit down and we will begin."

The two men sat down close together without a word, while Greathouse took his place in front of them, standing up.

"Thank you, gentlemen," he said, when they were seated, "I am glad to see that we can understand each other. These pistols have never failed me, and, as perhaps you two may be aware, I have made one time and another a very considerable use of them. More perhaps than has been good for me. But that is a question that is now too late in life with me to begin to discuss. It will be well for you, gentlemen, to understand just what I can and will do with them, if you should oblige me to do it. It may not be out of place also for me to add, that I have other resources besides these firearms."

Here he put his hand to the back of his neck, and drew out an enormous bowie-knife. It was at least twelve inches in length, with a hollow along the back filled with quicksilver to give it weight.

"You see this instrument, gentlemen, like the fire-arms. I would use this upon you most reluctantly. But if you disoblige me in my request, I give you the word of Robert Greathouse, which has never been voluntarily broken, that after I have exhausted my Derringers I will stick this knife into each of you up to the handle one at a time."

Here his voice got so low that for fear he might not be heard he approached within two feet of the men's faces, and stooped down so as to be heard more distinctly, and added, in a fierce whisper, —

"And before I pull it out, by God! I will turn it around in you both."

This he said stooping over and gazing in the eyes of the two wretches who sat mute before him. Being at last satisfied with the expression of both, he stood up and continued in an altered tone.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I think you now understand me. If so, it is a very fortunate thing for all of us. No harm can come to you, if you listen to me; but I must be heard. There will be no occasion for either of you to speak, or not at least till I desire you to do so. What I have to say is a matter that comes from me to you, and nothing that either of you could suggest can throw any light upon the matter, or aid me in the least. If you will allow me, gentlemen, I will sit down."

So saying, he drew a chair in front of the two speechless gentlemen, and sat down composedly in it, facing them and crossing his hands upon his lap with a Derringer in each.

"Gentlemen," he continued, "this is my first visit to a city, and I have come upon so absurd a business that I am quite sure, even if I should get out of it with my life, which is exceedingly improbable, that it will be my last one. I have come down here upon one of the most senseless and foolish expeditions that a man at the age of inaturity ever embarked upon. I have come to make an effort to do a thing so impracticable, so surrounded by obstacles of an unsurmountable nature, that there is not a child of ten years old living to-day who would not pronounce it impossible, and myself a proper person to be sent to a lunatic asylum, for thinking of it. I do not expect to succeed in the enterprise, gentlemen; I can no more control circumstances than any other man. I have come with the fixed belief that I am going to fail. But I have also come with just as settled a determination that it shall not be my fault if I do. If you will allow me, gentlemen, I will now explain to you what the absurd enterprise that brings me to this city, where I am such a stranger, consists of. I will make my story as short as possible, so as not to tire you. Pardon me if I begin by telling you something about myself, to show how I came into this absurd adventure. What my life has been, gentlemen, you both know. It has not been a useful life; judged by the standard of many good men, it has not been even a creditable one. But such as it has been, I can not now alter it. I am not quite sure that I would do so if I could. I sometimes wish that I could add a little good to the record, so as to make a

better average; but I would not go out of my way to reduce the amount of harm that I may have done. A few months ago I made the acquaintance of a family journeying from this city to the territory of Washoe. How I made their acquaintance is not important, and I will not take up your time with it. It is enough to say they were respectable people. Not more so than myself by origin, but by their habits fit to associate with men at least more peaceful than I am. This family consisted of an old gentleman, his wife, and one daughter. They are known, gentlemen, I believe, to both of you. It was Mr. Edmond Graham and his family. I had never in my wild and desperate career met with such people before. My life, as you are both aware, had been passed upon the border where such people do not often find their way. They treated me so kindly, that I soon became attached to them all. The young lady way beautiful, *very* beautiful, and I will not conceal from you two gentlemen, who have both seen her and perhaps know her well, that I soon became very much in love with her. And, gentlemen, I am so at this moment. But my habits of life, my standing in the community, precluded me from hoping to ever make that lady my wife. It was impossible, and I must, my own judgment told me, dismiss the matter from my mind. I did so some time ago, and went away upon an expedition against the Indians. Two days ago I returned to Virginia City, and heard positively what I had already heard by rumor, that the lady who possessed my heart was in deep trouble. I went to see her and ascertained the cause. It was a sad and touching story that was told me. During my absence her father had suddenly disappeared, — fled, it was said, to avoid the clamors of creditors whose demands he was unable to satisfy. Under the shock of this calamity her mother sank, and in a week died. As if these afflictions were not enough to fill to overflowing the cup of sorrow left to the destitute orphan, she at the same time became in some manner satisfied that her father had not fled from the country, as was generally believed, but that, on the contrary, he was, and she thinks he at this moment is, a prisoner, dragging out a miserable and hopeless existence, perhaps slowly perishing at the bottom of his own mine. Don't interrupt me, Mr. Bloodstone," he said, pointing the pistol at that gentleman with a graceful wave, not menacingly, but simply because the weapon was in his hand and waved with it. "To speak will only cause an unnecessary consumption of your valuable time. To resume, gentlemen.

"I will tell you what I have come to this city for. I have come to ask you two gentlemen to go with me to Washoe to the Graham mine, and let Mr. Graham out of it and go to his daughter. In order to induce you to comply with my request, I will tell you precisely what I am going to do. As you seem, by something very like a misfortune, to have fallen upon my hands in a couple, I am going to ask you both together to go voluntarily with me out of this house and down to the steamer which sails at four o'clock. I will ask you to go on board that steamer, and so to Sacramento, where we will take the train, and thence by railroad and stage-coach we will journey to the Graham mine in Washoe. There I shall ask you to let me put you into the cage of that mine and go down the shaft, I going with you, to the bottom."

Mr. Bloodstone offered to speak; but Greathouse stopped him peremptorily with a wave of his pistol.

"Don't offer to speak again, Mr. Bloodstone, without orders, or I warn you I shall stop your tongue abruptly and finally. When we reach the bottom of the mine, we will make diligent search for the missing gentleman, for the space of exactly thirty minutes, measured by a watch. If at the end of that time we shall not have found him, I shall put my Derringers to your heads, and blow both of your brains out, and leave you there. This I shall not ask your consent to, but will do it at the end of the time without any discussion upon the matter. I shall only expect you to walk close side by side wherever you go, letting me come four feet behind you. You must not separate; you must not go to any place where I cannot follow you; you must not permit a crowd of people to surround you, so as to get between you and myself, and, above all, you must speak no word nor make any sign that will cause anybody to suspect what has occurred between us. Remembering these injunctions, you can now ring the bell and make known your wants. You can, if you choose, send for whom you please, and transact such matters as you like. As for you, Mr. Withergreen, if you wish to send for your family, to take leave of them, do so by all means; I shall make no sort of objection. I think it would be a pity to go upon a journey long at the very least, and which may be perpetual, without bidding adieu to them. I feel how utterly powerless I am to carry out my enterprise without your joint concurrence. My life is as much imperilled as yours, precisely, and all depends upon our acting together. Remembering what I have told you, and avoiding what I have asked

you to avoid, your two lives are the safest lives to-day in San Francisco. I will defend you against any enemy that can attack you, and with the last drop of my blood. Should the steamer take fire I will take you upon my back as a precious treasure, and swim with you to the land. I will keep you, gentlemen, as the apple of my eye. If you were my brothers, my children, I could not take more care of you than I shall if you go with me. The success of my enterprise depends upon my taking you safely to Washoe. If I do not succeed I do not wish to live longer. Failure to me is worse than death. If I am to succeed, you are to me worth more than diamonds and pearls, for without you I cannot win the prize that has been laid before me. But don't, gentlemen, if you value your existence, misunderstand Greathouse, and think he wants to come out of this affair with his life. He does not. I would not walk to the door to save my life at this moment. If I don't get Mr. Graham out of that mine, I don't want to live any longer, and if you will believe me, gentlemen, I don't intend that you shall. If Mr. Graham should happen to be in that mine by any chance, and we can find him, you are both as free from danger as a king in his palace and surrounded with an army of faithful guards. If he is not there then you are both booked for kingdom-come now and there is no use trying to escape. For, gentlemen, Greathouse has got you and he is going to take you into camp this very trip." This was said with a tone so low and so intensely earnest that both gentlemen turned even more pale than ever. Bloodstone was wholly speechless with fright.

"Mr. Withergreen," continued Greathouse, in a relaxed voice, "you may now speak upon the subject of whom you wish to see before we start."

The gentleman addressed considered for a short time. It was evident that neither of them had for a moment doubted the earnestness of Greathouse. It was certain from the first that precisely what he said he would do, that he would surely do. Such being the case, to hesitate was to perish instantly, and each knew it. They both knew that Greathouse had never entered into the great city upon any child's play, or for purposes of idle boasting. It was utterly at variance with his character. This each knew only too well, and acting upon it they had surrendered at the first summons.

"Colonel Greathouse," said Withergreen, "I do not dare to see anybody for fear of some misunderstanding. If my people

should come about me, you might fancy that I was doing something looking to an escape, and might hastily destroy me as well as Mr. Bloodstone. Again, Mr. Bloodstone might inconsiderately do something that would involve us both in destruction. I think it would be better to proceed at once to the steamer. For my part, I am willing to go with you."

"A very sensible conclusion, Mr. Withergreen, for I admit that I might make the mistake you suggest, and it is better to avoid it if possible. What say you, Mr. Bloodstone?"

Bloodstone could not open his mouth. He was completely terror-stricken. But the signs he could make indicated his acquiescence in Mr. Withergreen's plan.

"Very well, gentlemen, let us be moving, then. Now I should be very sorry indeed to overthrow my own plans and to destroy your lives by any sort of mistake, so I suggest that you take each other's arms, and go directly out of the house. There we will take the first carriage we can find, and proceed at once to the steamer. Does this accord with your own judgment, gentlemen?"

Both signified their approval, and so it was done. Withergreen bore up firm and steady, and offered his arm to Bloodstone. But that gentleman was quite broken down. All his conceit, which was his most notable characteristic, was gone. He could scarcely stand, much less talk, as he usually was so ready to do. But he contrived to hook on to the arm of his leader, the president of the Pactolus, and so they marched out of the door; Greathouse, with both hands in his pockets, holding, as was his custom, his cocked Derringers, marching after them at four feet distance. As they passed out of the hotel, Dick, the bell-boy, ran after Greathouse, and called to him, —

"Don't you want your baggage, Colonel Greathouse?"

"No, Dick," said that gentleman, "I shall be back in a day or two; you can keep it for me till I come again."

As they marched through the street to the carriage, no one saw anything unusual in the appearance of the party. The two friends took the back seat, and Greathouse sat facing them. In a half hour, they were on the steamer, bound up the bay. The two, under Greathouse's orders, took a state-room together, and at once went to bed, though it was only half-past four o'clock. That done, Greathouse looked in first to satisfy himself that there was no back door by which they might escape; then he took his seat in front of their room in a stiff chair, and

so sat patiently, upright as he had done before in No. 42, and without closing his eyes once all night, watching his prisoners.

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## CHAPTER XLIII.

### SIX HOURS AHEAD OF TIME.

AT eight o'clock the following morning the train from Sacramento reached the station at Folsom.

Jack Gowdy was in his place upon the box of his coach, but he did not shout as lustily as usual for the passengers to take their seats for Virginia. On the contrary, he was unusually quiet. He looked anxiously from time to time, not at the passengers who were crowding over the platform near to him, but at the stream that still poured out of the station door. He evidently expected some one. Though he had not called for passengers to take their places in the coach, two or three had done so without invitation. At last his face brightened up, as he saw Greathouse coming out of the station door, walking behind two gentlemen, each dressed in black coats and hats. When they reached the coach, Greathouse shouted to Jack, —

"I say, driver, did you get my telegram, asking for an extra coach to take a party of gentlemen over to Virginia?"

"All right, sir!" cried Jack, "this is the coach that has been reserved for you."

"But," said Greathouse, looking in at the door, "you have allowed some gentlemen to get into my private coach."

"Have I?" said Jack, looking down at the window. "I beg your pardon, sir, it is a mistake. Gentlemen," he cried, to the passengers, who were already seated, "you have made a mistake. This is a private coach, engaged by this gentleman in advance. You must get out."

"What are we to do?" said the passengers, at the same time coming out, and looking very angry and dissatisfied.

"There will be another coach here in a few minutes," said Jack; "just wait five minutes, and you will be provided for. Jump in, Colonel Greathouse, with your friends."



Greathouse opened the door, and Bloodstone and Withergreen entered and took the back seat. Greathouse sat in front of them, and shouted to Jack, —

“All right! Go ahead!”

In an instant the six mustangs at a full run were turning the corner that led into the main road over the mountains. The two passengers turned pale, for the coach in going around the corner tilted over, so that but two wheels touched the ground.

“Don’t be alarmed, gentlemen,” said Greathouse. “It is Jack Gowdy on the box, and he knows how to handle horses as well as any man that ever cracked a whip.”

But it did look like a runaway team as the horses dashed furiously by the stage office, and so out of the town on the Washoe road. The stage agent rushed out to see the coach go by, and then went in again with a long face.

“Dull times,” said he to his assistant. “Gowdy has gone over with only three passengers, and I believe he is drunk again. If he is, he will kill more stock than his head is worth before he gets to Virginia. The company can’t stand that sort of thing long.”

Jack laid on the whip with might and main, wondering all the while why Greathouse had taken it into his head to have the coach all to himself. “It is all right,” muttered he, as he cracked his whip and thundered along; “but it would have been just as easy to have told me that he wanted the empty coach, and then I could have made my arrangements to meet such a case.”

When they had got well into the mountains, Bob called out to stop. Jack pulled up, and Greathouse came out and mounted up with him.

“Jack, could you not, by pushing things, take us to the mouth of the Graham mine before daylight to-morrow morning?”

Jack looked amazed at the bare idea.

“The whole thing may turn on our doing it.”

“But, Bob, it will kill the horses.”

“How many, Jack?”

“Well, we change ten times between here and the mine, taking six fresh horses at each change; it is easily calculated. I should say it would kill about sixty.”

“Well, kill them, Jack, but take us in by daylight.”

“I don’t like to murder horse-flesh, Bob.”

“You would rather do it than to kill human beings, would you not, Jack?”

“That depends a good deal upon who the human beings are.

What sort of stock ; you understand. If they were decent people, I might kill the horses first, Bob."

"That is about where the thing is coming to, Jack ; I suspect you will have to choose between killing people, and pretty good people at that, and killing horses."

"In that case, Bob, I will try to send my team as fast as I can."

"Very well Jack, let them go. Don't trifle away your time on this road ; it is not a pleasant one to me, and never was."

Here Greathouse descended to the interior of the coach, and resumed his seat in front of Withergreen and Bloodstone. They had been going fast before, but now they flew at a fearful speed. At each station for changing horses, Greathouse could see the stable-men leading away the poor beasts, and looking at them with amazement. Jack had but one explanation for his haste, which he gave at all the stables. "I am going over on a race with the other line ; we are trying to beat the Henness Pass stage line to Virginia. Our president has made a big bet with theirs, that we can beat them, and my orders are not to spare horse-flesh."

This was not an unusual thing ; such bets and races being of common occurrence, so that the people along the road were satisfied. The boys at the stable remarked the small number of passengers, and thought their own line would win.

"Jack has tricked the other side," said they, "by getting away with only three people in his coach."

They passed Strawberry in the afternoon, and as night came on were deep in the Sierras, and pushing on for Lake Bigler.

"We are all right till seven o'clock," said Jack to Greathouse, who was taking a short ride on the box with the driver, but keeping, as he did all the time, a sharp lookout down at the door of the coach. "But about that hour, the agent will come into Folsom from Sacramento, and then the murder will be out. Now is the time to cut the telegraph wires. That may give us three or four hours more, and after that, the devil must take care of his own."

"Very well, let us do it now, while we have a good chance," said Greathouse, standing up on the top of the coach. Just at that point there was a place where the wires hung lower than usual.

"Drive under it and stop, Jack."

This the driver did, and in an instant Greathouse was tugging at the wires with all his force.

"It is too strong for me, Jack. Can you throw your weight upon it? I don't like to trouble our friends in the coach, but I will have to do it if we can't break down the wires without them."

Jack stood up, holding his lines with one hand, and swung his weight upon the iron. It broke, rattling down upon the coach with such a noise that the horses became frightened, and Jack was obliged to let them run.

"Send them," cried Greathouse, "the wire is broken down for a quarter of a mile, and, if they were to commence now, they could not put it up again under an hour."

At midnight, they were galloping with a fresh team along the south end of Lake Bigler, and making fine speed; but at this point the weather, which had been fine, suddenly changed, and the rain came down in torrents. Before they reached the Glenbrook House, the horses were splashing through pools of water that filled the road. Here they changed horses again without difficulty. The cutting of the wires had protected them, and Jack's story of the race was received without question.

"You are making wonderful speed," said the station-master. "You are sure to win the race, for you are now more than six hours ahead of time."

"I shall try my best."

"I will make the pace so lively that they won't think much about trying to escape from this coach," muttered Jack to himself.

The brake was left untouched, and the vehicle pushing upon the horses sent them flying down the grade with fearful rapidity. It was not driving that Jack now did. It was too dark to drive. He could only hold the lines in his hand and let the horses follow their own instinct. True, they would not go over the precipice of their own accord; but they might go so near the edge at any moment as to let the coach fall over. Jack held his breath, but sat firm.

"There is no help for it," he thought. "Poor Bob is no better than a dead man now, and if the thieves are not frightened out of their wits, they may rise on us at any moment and take possession. I must scare them out of all idea of resistance or escape."

And so they thundered along the narrow shelf cut in the mountain-side, at the rate of sixteen miles an hour, trusting all to the instinct of six mustang horses.



At each half minute a gleam of lightning would blaze forth, and show them the yawning gulf, fifteen hundred feet deep, along the very edge of which they were madly rushing. So, round and round, they twisted and curved with the spurs and angle of the mountain, at times running out upon a projecting point, at the end of which, seemingly, nothing but wings could rescue them from the fearful plunge that lay beyond; but, just as the leap was to be taken, the jaunty lead horses would turn a sharp corner of the projecting wall, followed by the others, and at last the coach itself would sway over the abyss, and then, with a roll and a swing, follow the flying horses along the ledge, still in safety.

Each minute seemed to Jack an age.

"The next turn will catch us, dead sure," he thought.

And he knew but too well every point, every turnout and every angle of special danger on the whole road as well as a pilot knows the shoals, rocks, and quicksands over which he must navigate.

"The devil himself could not turn such a corner at this pace!"

But somehow they did turn them, and kept on turning as fast as they came to them, till Jack began to mutter to himself that the devil, after having given him so many hard kicks, was surely in a friendly mood that night.

"The old blackguard is not such a sneak after all. He is standing by his own, for this once."

That any higher power would ever condescend to look after so insignificant a person as himself, never entered Jack's mind. His dealings were exclusively with the devil. It might be well enough for good respectable people to make application to another quarter. Jack would have done the same had he felt that he could make any reasonable claim for heavenly aid. But his conscience told him that he had no rights there. He knew well that there was a power higher than that to which he so readily yielded, but he also knew that it was not to be invoked by such as he.

"All I can hope for," thought the stage-driver, "is to be overlooked by the Master Eye. If I should ask any favors, it could only serve to fetch me into notice and to point out my shortcomings."

His dealings, therefore, were exclusively with Satan, not from choice, but because he saw but too plainly the utter hope-

lessness of any other course. To seek help from the heavenly powers would be presumptuously flying in the face of God.

"I belong to the devil, and must make the best terms with the old chap that I can obtain. He will allow me to stay about here as long as it suits him to do so, and when his stock begins to run low he will take me into camp."

But when he referred to the common adversary, it was not with servile tone or maundering humility, but with the bold respect with which a gentleman addresses a monarch, or speaks of the inevitable.

"He can have me when he calls for me, but I am not going to hand in my checks till the game is squarely played out, and till then I will take it as it comes."

This was the frame of mind in which the driver felt, as he dashed round the corners, points, and spurs of the Sierras. He did not dare to pray to heaven, he was too great a sinner for that, and he scorned to ask aid at the hands of the enemy to whom, in the end, he must surrender. So he sat with his feet braced and his teeth set tight together, and holding his lines, waited for such fate as might be meted out to him.

The devil, or some supernatural power, did, indeed, seem to be lending a friendly support to the expedition. For they passed in a full run safely over points and passes that Jack, even in daylight, was glad to go by in safety at a slow walk. But the surmounting of one of these dangers only gave a short moment of respite, for others, still more dreadful, drew, by that very success, measurably nearer.

An hour had already been consumed in the descending course, and the fearful pace at which they had travelled began to produce its natural effect upon the horses. Jack could already feel the hot steam from their bodies drifting back into his face, and could hear their panting chests as they gradually succumbed to fatigue. His experience told him, too, that, as they grew more tired, their sureness of foot, which was his main reliance in accomplishing his perilous descent, was proportionately reduced. A blown horse is not as careful where he steps as a fresh one is.

Near the end of the grade was a certain sharp angle, the worst on the road. Jack remembered it, and looked forward to the point with dread.

"If the horses were fresh, they might pass it," he thought, "in safety. But they will be wholly indifferent to what happens

to them by the time we get there, and then down we will go to the bottom in a heap."

But, weary and panting with fatigue as the poor mustangs were, they could not relax the speed, for the descent was rapid, and they must keep out of the way of the pursuing coach. As they drew near the narrow pass, Jack set his teeth more firmly together, and pushed down a little on the brake.

"If the devil is not in special need of me, this is the time to give me a lift, and I will not forget his kindness."

This Jack muttered as they swung round the point. The hint to his Satanic majesty was only half completed when the driver heard a plunge and a shrill cry from one of the horses at the brink of the precipice. In a moment the same sound was repeated from far down in the abyss. One of the leaders had plunged over the bank, and was already cutting through the air, hundreds of feet below, upon his fearful way to the bottom.

"It's all up," thought Jack, but he made no effort to leave the box. "I will play out the hand like a gentleman," he muttered to himself, "and not leave Bob to go over the bank alone."

But they did not go over. Fortunately, the falling horse broke through the harness and dropped out of it, without pulling the others after him, as there was great danger of his doing. And at the moment when Jack had given up all for lost, the coach swung around, made another plunge forwards, and rolled into a place of safety.

At the same instant a flash of lightning revealed the road in front, smooth and comparatively safe; but it also revealed the fact, which Jack had only suspected before, that the team was reduced to five horses.

The gray morning light was just peeping above the hills beyond the Sugar Loaf, when the tired horses drove up, not to the stage office in Virginia, but to the hoisting works of the Graham mine.

## CHAPTER LXIV.

## SERVING THE WRIT OF HABEAS CORPUS.

JACK jumped down from the box and rapidly released the panting team from the coach, and turned the horses into an open yard in the rear of the shed. Greathouse had come from Carson inside the coach with his prisoners. Jack, having got rid of the horses, called out in a low, distinct voice, —

“Joe! Joe! Joe Bowers, I say!”

He paused a moment, as the tall, lank form of a man came slowly from behind a low wall that surrounded the yard.

“Are you there, Jack?” demanded the man, in a voice that resembled the sound of a creaky barn-door turned slowly on its hinges by the wind. At the same time he shambled leisurely through the dim morning light towards the coach.

“Yes, Joe, we are here; look sharp now, and be spry.”

“What has kept you so long, Jack?” creaked the barn-door voice. “I looked for you the day you left me; I thought you were to have been back in an hour.”

“Yes! yes! Joe!” said Jack, with fresh impatience, “don’t talk about that now. Bear a hand; we have business to attend to.”

Then, turning to the coach, Jack continued, speaking to Greathouse, —

“Now, Colonel, you can come out with your friends. We have arrived.”

This said, he opened the door and held it for them to descend.

“All right, Jack. Come gentlemen, we are nearly at our journey’s end.”

Withergreen and Bloodstone stepped out of the coach to the ground.

“Gentlemen,” he continued, “this is the door of the hoisting

works. The inmates are your friends, and know your voice. I shall expect you to call them and to ask for admittance. This you are to do in a prudent manner, in order not to excite their alarm. There are several men in the place, and I shall hold you accountable for their conduct. Now we understand each other, proceed."

The two gentlemen, whom we have styled the prisoners, marching side by side, approached the door, followed closely by Greathouse, the driver, and Joe Bowers. Arriving at the door, Withergreen knocked for admission, at first, gently. Receiving no answer, he repeated the knock louder. Soon they saw a light shining from a hole, and heard a man's voice demanding who was at the door. Withergreen answered, for Bloodstone had from the first appeared incapable of any act. He was like a condemned criminal being led to execution.

"Open the door," said Withergreen; "it is Mr. Bloodstone, the superintendent, in company with Mr. Withergreen. We wish to enter the mine."

"Are you there, Mr. Bloodstone?" demanded the voice.

"Yes," said that gentleman, faintly.

The man appeared satisfied, and proceeded to unbar the door. When it was opened, instead of the gentlemen who had demanded admission, Greathouse stepped in, and putting a pistol to the man's head, said, in a low voice, —

"Don't speak, nor move, unless you want the top of your head blown off; for if you do, I will fire at the first attempt. You know me, — I am Greathouse; and what I say, I will do."

The man stood subdued. He knew Greathouse well, by sight, and understood that he had fallen into bad hands. Greathouse made a sign to the others to enter, and they followed him in.

"How many men have you in the place, and where are they?" he asked of the man, in a whisper.

"Two others," was the answer, "and they are in bed, there," pointing to a distant corner of the shed.

"Where are your arms?"

Again the man pointed his finger, this time to a rack against the wall.

"Bowers," said Greathouse, "take care of those guns."

Joe stepped at once to the rack, and took down three heavy rifles, and a lot of revolvers, and laid them in a place of safety.

"Now tie this man carefully, so that he can do no harm to himself, or anybody else. This is only a matter of precaution,"



said Greathouse to the man ; "we have taken the place and don't intend to have any mischance. There is a rope upon the wall, Joe."

Without a word of comment, the ox-driver, with a readiness that Jack Gowdy's account of his friend had scarcely permitted Greathouse to hope from him, bound the prisoner and laid him securely upon his back.

"Now, Jack," continued Greathouse, "while I remain here with our friends, the gentlemen from San Francisco and this one who is upon his back, you two proceed to the beds that have been pointed out to you, and take care of his two companions."

Gowdy and Joe Bowers obeyed the order promptly. With cocked revolvers in hand, they surrounded the beds of the sleeping men and awakened them. They rubbed their eyes and looked. When they saw how matters stood, they surrendered, and were tied as the first one had been. When all was done, Greathouse ordered his subordinates to bring the two last prisoners and deposit them upon their backs by the side of the first one. This was done.

"Now, Bowers, oblige me by tying carefully the hands of my two friends here."

"I beg your pardon," he said to them, "but it is for the safety of all, that I adopt this apparently harsh measure. I hope you will deem it advisable to submit without objection, for I shall insist upon it."

No objection was heard, and the hands of both men were bound behind their backs. When all was done, Greathouse spoke.

"Jack," said he, "lock and bar the door carefully, and then we will determine upon our next plans."

When this was done, and they were again together, Greathouse continued, —

"Gentlemen," he said, addressing all who were present, — "myself and my two friends have advanced thus far in the execution of a plan for the release of Mr. Graham from what we conceive to be an unjust imprisonment. Before we set out upon our attempt the law had been invoked, and had proved powerless, not only to rescue the gentleman, but even to investigate the question of whether or not he was kept in the mine. We have only been able to progress thus far, because we have adhered strictly to our pledges. It has been believed by everybody with whom we have come in contact, that whatever we

said we would do, that we would do it though the heavens should fall the next minute. This demonstrates most powerfully the advantage that it is to a gentleman to always remember that he is a gentleman, and to keep his word in every instance. By doing this, he always has credit for good faith. That credit has proved our capital in this adventure. We have not been called upon thus far to perform any of the things that we felt called upon to say that we would do; and the reason has been that everybody has given us credit. They have not doubted that we would do precisely as we said we would do, and they have acted in accordance with that opinion. It is a wonderful thing to be able to inspire so much confidence in a bare word; and it can only be done by always sacredly keeping that word. Having acted so far in this faithful, and consequently successful manner, it is now no time to forget the cause of our success. What we say, we will do, gentlemen; believe us, we beseech you, that we will continue to do so to the end, no matter what may follow. As for you two gentlemen, Mr. Bloodstone and Mr. Withergreen, I will tell you now precisely what I am about to do in your case. The mine is reported to be filled with mephitic gases, destructive to human life. That fact can only be settled by going down and testing it. I possess the power to test it upon you without danger to myself. I could let one, or both of you, down in the cage and draw you up again in ten minutes; but I have promised to protect you, as long as you act in good faith with me. I shall keep my pledge. I will share the danger in whatever form it takes. I shall at once descend to the bottom of the mine, taking both of you with me. Should I find this story to be true, I will then concede that Mr. Graham is not in the mine, and that an injustice has been done to you, Mr. Bloodstone, by Miss Graham, and to both of you by myself. If the experiment does not destroy you, then you shall be set at liberty; I will ring the bell for our attendants to draw us up again. It may be that we can get back to the surface alive. If we can do so, I shall untie your hands, and humbly beg your pardon for the injustice I have done to you, and for the great inconvenience I have caused you. Then I shall let you go free, to do with me, or anybody else, as you please. I shall in such case be in your power. But if, on the contrary, I should find the air in the mine pure, and such as a human being can breathe and still survive, then I shall assume the fact to be as Miss Graham believes it to be. A fraud will have been put upon the public, in the statement

made of the condition of the mine. You, Mr. Bloodstone, have stated that the mine is filled with choke-damps. If it is not true, you must suffer consequences you have brought upon yourself. I shall, in that case, after we have reached the bottom, give you, gentlemen, thirty minutes to find Mr. Graham, living or dead. If you do not find him within that time, I shall kill you both. But in order to spare the unnecessary effusion of blood, I shall kill one of you first; I shall do this to convince the other of the serious character of my intentions. There is danger that you may risk your lives by misunderstanding, after all, the real character of the gentleman with whom you have to deal. I refer to myself, Robert Greathouse. In order not to allow my project to miscarry in consequence of such ungrounded misunderstanding of my resolutions, I shall shoot one of you punctually at the end of twenty minutes, and the second I shall shoot ten minutes later. This, gentlemen, you will greatly oblige me if you will consider as settled, now, before we enter the mine. But to show you that I have not entered upon the business without seriously considering the matter from all points of view, I will further say, that I have deemed it only just to decide in advance which of you I will shoot first, as a lesson to the other. Although I am morally satisfied that both of you know as much about the matter as either one of you knows, yet I have considered that it is only just to presume that Mr. Bloodstone, the superintendent of the mine, is more likely to know all than Mr. Withergreen, who has no public connection with Mr. Graham's business. Such being but a just and common-sense view of the matter, I have thought it to be no more than fair not to permit the superintendent to speculate upon my determination at the expense of his friend, Mr. Withergreen. Mr. Bloodstone certainly knows all that can be known; Mr. Withergreen may not. I have therefore, in view of this reasonable idea, determined already which of you I shall kill first, and which last. If my friend Mr. Graham is not found within twenty minutes from the time we commence our search, I shall promptly blow out the brains of Mr. Bloodstone. If ten minutes later he still remains undiscovered, I shall do precisely the same thing to my good friend, Mr. Marvin Withergreen. These things, gentlemen, I shall do with great reluctance, but I have not come upon this expedition to be balked, and I do not intend to be balked, as I have already told you, if I can avoid it. That, I believe, is all I have to say to you, gentlemen. As for you, Jack and

Joe, it remains to give you your directions. I may not come out of this affair alive; the chances of reason all are against me. As for you two, you may, and probably will, escape. I shall go down with my two friends here to search the mine, if it is not filled with damp. As we go down, I shall hold the signal in my hand. When we reach the level in which my two friends wish to commence the search,—for I shall leave the method wholly to them,—I will ring the bell once for you to stop. If I ring immediately afterwards, a series of running taps of the bell, it will let you know that the air is bad, and you are to hoist up as rapidly as possible. Now remember me, gentlemen,—one tap to stop; a running alarm of taps will tell you to hoist the cage, for we will be suffocating. But if, after we stop at any level you hear two distinct taps of the bell, then you are to understand that the mine is free and the air pure. To make sure, I may repeat this signal several times, so as to have no misunderstanding about it. That is, a repetition of double taps at intervals will assure you that we are exploring the mine, and that it is free from gases. Do you understand me, gentlemen?"

Both Jack and Joe signified that they fully knew the signals agreed upon.

"Very well," continued Greathouse, "then let us determine what is to be done besides. You two are to stay here and keep watch. If either of these three gentlemen, who lie here tied up with ropes, should make any disturbance, you will, without hesitation or delay, proceed at once to cut all their heads off. This done you will lift up the cage and pitch them down the shaft into the water below. If I am not back here in half an hour precisely, one of you will come down into the mine and shoot these two gentlemen, if I have failed to do it. The other will wait at the shaft's mouth to hoist you up when it is done. If either of these gentlemen, or both of them together, should come to the top of the mine unaccompanied either by myself or Mr. Graham, you will immediately pitch him or them back down the shaft. Now, do you understand me, gentlemen?"

Again Jack and Joe assured him that they understood all that had been said.

"Very good; then let us proceed to business. Give me three lights."

Three miners' lamps were lighted.

"Put one on the top of the heads of each of my two friends,

and put one on my head. Now, gentlemen, step into the cage."

Withergreen and Bloodstone, each with a lamp on his head, and with his hands firmly bound behind his back, took places, as ordered. Greathouse stepped to the back of the cage, and placed the prisoners in such a position that their backs were towards himself and their faces towards the door of the cage.

"Now you will be standing so that when we stop you can step out directly in to the drift and go in the direction you may wish to go. Boys," said Bob, before being let down, "keep wide awake, and don't forget what you are about. If I never see you again, good-by. Now, lower away slowly. My two friends will let me know when to stop."

And, so saying, the cage was let down the shaft and disappeared in the earth.

"Listen sharp for the bell, Joe," said Jack. "If the damps strike them, they can't be brought up too quick, I can tell you."

"All right, Jack ; I am listening."

Down went the cage, slowly, for both men were expecting each minute to hear the signal to draw up again. But no signal came. The mark on the rope indicated that the first level had been passed, and the same for the second, with no sound of the bell.

"They don't stop in the second level," said Jack.

"There is no bad air in the mine," said the sensible Joe Bowers. "I will bet six yoke of oxen on that. Had there been any damps in the mine, before now they would have been suffocated or ringing to come up. Here comes the mark for the third level. Perhaps they will make a call there, if it is only to look around a bit. No ; they pass the third level."

"Are they going to the bottom, Joe?"

"No ; that cannot be, for we know that the water is on that level. Then here comes the mark for the fourth level. Let us see what they will say to it."

Clang ! rang out the bell, clear and loud enough to start the engine of an ocean steamer. "Stop at the fourth level," says the signal.

"Stop her," shouted Jack. "Now be ready, Joe, for the order to hoist."

But a minute passed and no such order comes. The thin morning air is again disturbed. Clang ! clang ! comes a double ring and the bell is still again.

"The mine is free," said Joe, in his slow, creaking barn-door voice, "and they are gone to search for Mr. Graham."

A minute passes, and the signal is repeated to prevent misunderstanding. Clang! clang! goes the great bell, the tones ringing and reverberating in the morning air.

"All right, old boy!" shouted Jack, gleefully, down the mine, in the vain hope that Greathouse could hear him. "We understand you. Go on and hunt for the old man. We will take care of these fellows up here."

A minute more, and clang! clang! is once more signaled to settle all doubts.

"Now," said Joe, "look at your watch, Jack; for we count our time from that signal. If Bob don't ring to be hoisted up at the end of half an hour it is all over with him, and all we have to do is to slope out of this country as fast as we can go."

"That is so," said Jack. "Bob Greathouse is a prompt man; and when he makes a time-table he works up to it to the second. You stand by the lift, Joe, and I will look after our friends here, to prevent any treachery."

So saying, he drew his revolver from his holster, and took his stand by the bound men on the floor, and stood waiting for further developments.

## CHAPTER XLV.

## HOME AGAIN.

HELEN was not left long alone. After the departure of Greathouse, and during the first days of the trial, Blanche Mc-Iver returned again to visit her friend. She arrived the morning after Greathouse went away to, as he said, serve his writ of *habeas corpus*, and found Helen in bed with a fever. But her presence was almost alone enough to restore the invalid to health, and with nursing and kind words the young lady was able to rise the following morning. Blanche had come with still more powerful arguments than ever to induce the orphan to accompany her home, but all in vain.

"I am glad to see you, dear Blanche," she said; "so glad, that I am not sure that I have acknowledged all when I say that perhaps you have saved my life. But you will send me to bed again if you urge me to violate my duty, so clearly as I feel that I would do in leaving the place before I have found my father. Don't talk about it, dear Blanche, if you love me."

This injunction was quite enough for Blanche.

"I shall say no more," she said; "but I shall be obliged to remain with you. I cannot go away again and leave you alone to die, as I am sure you will if you mope in this way."

Failing to induce Helen to go home with her, Blanche's next effort was tried to get her friend to go out and take the air. But even this she could not find the courage to do. She declared that she could not leave the room.

"Very well," said Blanche, "if you will not go out, then I will not."

But on the fourth morning, an event happened that changed suddenly all their plans. They had risen, and were dressed in morning costume, waiting for breakfast to be brought up, when the door opened, and Jack Gowdy walked in, looking very rough and uncouth even for that wild fellow. Jack was always welcome at No. 16, and having been away for a four days' journey, during which it was known to the young ladies that he had been to California, his arrival was an event. Blanche, who

had already become a great partisan of Jack's, ran to shake hands with him.

"How do you do, 'Old Hoss'?" she cried, falling at once into the language most easily understood by the stage-driver, "I am so glad to see you."

Jack took her hand, but did not appear to be quite equal to the occasion. He regarded the two young ladies with a confused look.

"What is the matter, Jack?" demanded Blanche, observing at a glance that something unusual had occurred to so disturb the stage-driver's manner, "You look like a 'biled owl.' What has gone wrong with you?"

Helen now arose and came forward.

"Good morning, Mr. Gowdy," she said, kindly, as she always addressed Jack, "I hope you are quite well?"

"Yes, miss; quite well," he stammered, "but I have something to say to you."

"To say to me," cried Helen, turning pale. "Is it about my father, Jack? Have you heard of him? Tell me, is he well?"

"He is well, miss," said Jack, "I have heard of him. We know where he is, and he is well."

Blanche had already caught Helen in her arms as she sank down, but it was but a passing weakness, and in a moment she was plying Jack with more questions.

"Where is he? How did you hear of him? Will he be here soon?"

All these demands crowded after each other so rapidly, that Jack could not find words to answer.

Observing this fact, Helen paused to wait for him.

"He is well, miss; he will be at home soon. Very soon. I have seen him myself."

"Then he is here now," cried Helen, rushing to the door.

But before she could reach it she was folded to her father's breast. He had been waiting in the hall till his daughter could be prepared by Jack for the surprise.

Mr. Graham being quite taken up with the greetings of Helen, there was nothing for Blanche to do but to bestow her congratulations upon the stage driver, which she did with a hearty good will, hugging and kissing Jack till he was ready to retreat from the room for protection.

Mr. Graham and Helen withdrew to another room, and his story was soon told to her.

On the Sunday that he had left the house for a walk, he



had, as the reader will recollect, descended into the mine, following the party with Mr. Bloodstone, which he had accidentally seen descending. After searching about the dark labyrinths of the fourth level for some time, he at last came upon the party all in a group. They were engaged in examining the rock in the wall of one of the chambers. As he entered the place he learned by their remarks, as well as the specimens of rock they had in their hands, and which they were testing with pocket instruments, that they had discovered silver ore. Without hesitation he had approached and addressed them, and with his lamp examined the silver ore that sparkled and glistened in the light in every direction around them. He was in the midst of a cavern filled with treasure of almost fabulous value. But his amazement was scarcely at an end when the manner of his companions filled him with alarm. He saw almost at a glance that his arrival had not been expected, and that he was in the midst of a hostile gang of desperate robbers, ready to take his life. He was not long kept in suspense as to their designs. They told him at once that he was a prisoner. The villains made no pretence of concealing their schemes. They had been for a long time plotting to obtain this treasure, and did not, so they said, intend to allow it to slip through their fingers at this late hour. Bloodstone had but little to say, but the other employees of Mr. Graham boldly proposed his immediate murder, and, but for Marvin Withergreen, would have carried their horrid project at once into execution. That gentleman objected to what he declared was not only an unnecessary, but a dangerous act.

"We can obtain our prize, gentlemen, much more easily," he said, "by holding him a prisoner with the power of life or death over him, than we can by staining our hands by a useless murder. That once done cannot be undone," he argued. "If we take his life, we place ourselves directly in the power of any one of the company who in anger at the rest, or upon a death-bed contrition, chooses to declare the deed. If we keep him here alive, we have the whole gains in our own hands. Mr. Bloodstone is engaged to marry his daughter. The wedding is to take place to-morrow. That once accomplished, we have such a hold upon Mr. Graham, through his family, that we can force a fair division of the profits. There is enough of it to make us all rich beyond computation. And even if we keep this gentleman a prisoner for a few months, he will, when set at liberty never take proceedings against his own son-in-law. He will

not allow such a disgrace to come upon his family. I tell you, gentlemen," argued Mr. Withergreen, "we have him here and no one can find him. We will say that he has fled from the country to avoid his creditors. We can at any time kill him if it becomes necessary to do so. But once dead, unless the killing is for some good purpose hereafter, you will have done a needlessly dangerous act, that puts each of us in the power of the others till the end of his life. Believe me, it will be time enough to kill him when we find that we cannot get the treasure in any other way."

Mr. Graham was obliged to stand in a corner of the chamber and hear, from beginning to end, this cold-blooded discussion, in which he was so deeply concerned.

✓ Mr. Withergreen's counsel prevailed. The others were satisfied to allow the proprietor to live, at least for a time, but he observed that Bloodstone appeared to have no sort of courage, either for good or evil. When the argument for immediate murder seemed the most powerful and likely to prevail, the superintendent stood in speechless acquiescence. When gentler and more prudent counsels were in the ascendency, he showed no signs of approbation or displeasure.

After two or three hours of bold discussion, during which, more than once, Mr. Graham's days had appeared to be already numbered, the conspirators withdrew and left him in the mine.

After several hours of absence, his watch indicating eleven o'clock at night, three of them returned, with Bloodstone at their head. They brought with them a straw mattress and some blankets for the prisoner's bed, and also food, drink, and a supply of lights.

Mr. Graham breathed more freely. "At least," he thought, "I have a respite and am not to be at once murdered."

But Bloodstone had also brought with him writing materials. This he put before the prisoner and coldly told him to "write a letter to his family, to the effect that he had fled to Salt Lake, because of his financial difficulties, and would be gone for several weeks."

This Mr. Graham declined to do.

"It may cost you your life, Mr. Graham, if you do not."

To this the prisoner did not condescend a reply.

After a time Bloodstone resumed the attack. "Write to your daughter, requesting her to go on with the marriage ceremony to-morrow, notwithstanding your absence, and when we

are married, Mr. Graham, on my honor you shall be set at liberty."

To this Mr. Graham made such a reply as let us hope any father would have made.

"I would rather die here than have my daughter marry you." ✓

Again was his life threatened, but he scorned to reply to the threat. At last, however, he spoke.

"I have reason to fear, Mr. Bloodstone, that you have obtained my daughter's love. If she consents to marry you of her own accord while I am detained here, I will promise upon my liberation to withdraw myself from the country, surrendering all claim to the mine, and will never tell of your treatment of me. I will do this for my daughter's sake, if she becomes your wife. But to influence her before she takes that step, never will I do it, not even to save my life. If she loves you, as I fear she does, she will believe your story and marry you; and from that moment you have nothing more to fear from her father."

The party withdrew, leaving the prisoner alone. From that time there was but little variety to his life. Twice more Bloodstone visited him, and tried to shake his resolution about advising the marriage. These visits brought joy to the father's heart, for they told him that the daughter had not tied herself in marriage to this monster. He now rejected, with even greater scorn than ever, the liberty offered him upon such hideous terms. For the last four days he had been left entirely alone. Not even the daily visits of the watchman to fetch him food had been made, and his supplies were nearly exhausted, — water he could find trickling down the sides of the mine, but he had already suspected that he was left to slowly perish from hunger, — when, one morning, as his watch informed him, for in the mine night and day were alike, he was startled from his fitful slumbers by the arrival of a party of men in the chamber where he slept. His first impression was that his last hour had come. He knew that it was an extraordinary time for people to be visiting the mine when all above ground were sleeping. The sight of Bloodstone, Withergreen, and a third large and powerful man, who proved to be Bob Greathouse, the murderer, added to his fears. "They have chosen the night to finish the crime already so nearly consummated. Greathouse, the murderer, will only add one more to a list of his victims." But the kind voice of the supposed murderer, in an instant reassured him. "No man," thought the prisoner, "can address such sympathetic tones to one whom he intends to murder." Another glance showed him

the hands of the two gentlemen to be tied securely behind their backs; they now were prisoners in turn. Greathouse came at once to the side of Mr. Graham's bed, and shook him warmly by the hand.

"I have been in search of you for some time," he said, "but at last these gentlemen have kindly been induced to join with me in the search, and that once done, we soon reached you without more trouble. You are now at liberty, sir, and we will at once leave this most unfitting place for a gentleman's detention. But, before going, Mr. Graham," continued Greathouse, "I will say, that in order to induce these very worthy gentlemen to assist me in my enterprise, in short to come with me as they did from a distance to effect your release, I ventured to promise them in your name, that if they would do so, and you should be found alive, that no harm should come to them or anybody for any act connected with your detention. Was I right in making this pledge, Mr. Graham?"

"Most assuredly, Colonel Greathouse," answered Mr. Graham. "Besides, there are circumstances which would have prevented my proceeding against the authors of my imprisonment, even had you made no such promise."

"Then let us leave this place as speedily as possible."

When they reached the surface, they found Jack Gowdy and Joe Bowers still guarding three men, who lay upon their backs on the floor of the hoisting-shed. Mr. Graham recognized in these discomfited wretches three of his jailers, and who had been formerly his most trusted employees, namely: the head miner, the engineer, and the watchman. They, as well as the two gentlemen, were without further ceremony relieved from their bonds, and the party took their way to the hotel.

At first they entered the room of Greathouse, where that gentleman broke to Mr. Graham, as gently as he could, the fact of his wife's death. The blow was a severe one, and was rendered the more grievous by the thought that his own conduct was not wholly free from blame.

"Had I not yielded to the temptation to pursue the phantom of wealth, to the oblivion of even my duty to those around me, this calamity would not have overtaken me. I could have supported my family in humble happiness," sighed the bereaved husband; "my poor darling that has gone never wanted more. To be once more rich, I have lost all that would have made that wealth enjoyable. Here, at last, I have found the long looked-for vein of precious metal. But what can bring back

the treasure I had in that loving heart which has been crushed in the search?"

From the day of Mr. Graham's disappearance the suit for the possession of his mine had been quietly pushed forward by Snakeweed and Spelter, and was actually on trial at the time of his escape. The court, the jury, and the witnesses had all been securely "fixed" in the interest of the conspirators, and victory was certain. But just as Mr. Spelter was closing his final address to the jury in his very best manner, his jet black hair standing on end with the fury of his eloquence, Mr. Graham, whom they believed to be securely locked in the bowels of the earth, walked into the court-room and took a seat by the side of his counsel. A thunderbolt would not have created greater consternation. It is needless to say that all further proceedings were speedily closed, and the suit dismissed. ✓

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## CHAPTER XLVI.

### ANOTHER ENGAGEMENT TO MARRY.

DURING the few days longer that Mr. Graham intended to remain in Washoe Territory, Blanche McIver readily consented to remain with her friend. Each day the sorrow-stricken father, accompanied by his daughter, made a pilgrimage to the little cemetery upon the mountain-side to sit by the grave of Matilda. Helen never told him how near she had been to being mated with a man of whom she had never thought except with a sensation of disgust. She saw that her father's mind was already prostrate beneath a sense of the wrong his own course had inflicted upon his family. The fact that he had been betrayed into this cruel conduct towards those he loved so dearly by a too ardent pursuit of wealth was ever present to his mind. "It is all past and gone," thought the daughter. "I have escaped from the evil, and will not add that recollection to the grief already so heavy for my poor father to bear."

Mr. Graham spoke but seldom of Bloodstone. He also felt the subject to be a delicate one. He feared that his daughter might have still some lingering regrets for the man, and so he would not dilate upon what he had suffered at his hands. A week had now almost passed since Mr. Graham's return. He

✓ had already fixed upon an early day for his departure to San Francisco. Harry Stacey had brought his client's affairs into a regular state of management. Mr. Graham was now the owner of a property the value of which was many millions. But he took no interest in it whatever. Indeed, he seemed unwilling to have the subject mentioned to him. It was an act of treason to her that was gone to enjoy the wealth that had been so dearly purchased. "It is the price of my darling's life," said the old gentleman, "and I cannot take it." The day before they were to go away, Blanche and Mr. Graham went to the grave of Matilda, leaving Helen for some reason at home. Directly after their departure from No. 16 there was a knock at the door. It proved to be Greathouse. This was the first time he had made his appearance since Mr. Graham's return. He had kept purposely away till the bereaved husband's grief should partially dull its edge. Helen had expected him daily to call, and claim the reward she had promised in the event of his delivering her father from captivity. He had at last come.

"Good-morning, Colonel Greathouse," she said, kindly, and pointing him to a chair. "We have been expecting to see you here every day, since you so gallantly restored my father to life and to me, his daughter. Your continued absence has been a matter of disappointment to us all." This she said with a tone of evident sincerity.

✓ Helen Graham felt that Greathouse had alone saved her father from a cruel death. And, more, that he had been induced to risk his life in the attempt by the promise of her hand in marriage. She intended to be true to her pledge. "Had he not acted so bravely I should have been compelled to marry Bloodstone, the murderer of all I love in this world. A man that I detested even when his hands were still unsullied by the blood of my darling mother. This alone is enough to win my hand, if not my heart. He shall have the one when he claims his rights, and the other if I can ever school it to forget the love that has already seized it and carried it, at least for the present, beyond my control."

✓ Greathouse sat for half an hour conversing with Helen, but without being able to bring up the subject that evidently was upon his mind. At last he made an effort, and said that he had something special to say to her, if he could only summon courage to say it.

"I suppose I may without difficulty imagine what it is,

Colonel Greathouse," said Helen, kindly helping him out in the struggle he was making. "You have come, I suppose, to claim the fulfilment of a promise made you only a few days ago by a young lady. She has not forgotten it, Colonel. She can never forget the obligation that she owes to you for your noble and generous conduct. You need not hesitate to speak of the matter, as I am quite prepared to have it brought up."

Greathouse looked at her eagerly.

"And suppose I am here for that purpose, Miss Graham," he said, "what is the young lady's answer to the suitor who comes to claim her hand?"

"She can have but one answer, Colonel Greathouse. The subject has been already agreed upon between the parties, so far as the young lady is concerned. It remains only with you, Colonel. I promised to become your wife, provided you claimed my hand. I cannot do more until you claim your rights."

"And are you ready to marry me, Miss Graham?" he asked, looking her in the face.

"I am," she answered without hesitation. "Here is my hand upon it."

He took her extended hand and raised it respectfully to his lips, and then, without retaining it for an instant, released it and allowed it to go back to the lady's lap.

"Do you know who I am, Miss Graham?" he demanded, in a sad tone. "Do you know what my former life has been? Do you know that I am Greathouse, the gambler and outlaw, the man of violence? In short, are you aware that I am called Bob Greathouse, the murderer?"

"I have heard all of that," she answered, calmly, "but I knew it long before I allowed you to serve me, to put me under a load of obligation. I knew it all when I told you that I would become your wife if you would find and restore to me my father. I have learned nothing new of you since, except that you are braver and nobler and more generous than I thought you to be; though it was not the first time I owed my life to your courage and strength. Believe me, Colonel Greathouse, that I have nothing more to learn about you. I shall not become the wife of Greathouse, the murderer; but my husband will be another and better man. It will be Greathouse, the generous and noble spirit, whom I know to be as good as he is brave and self-sacrificing."

He shook his head slowly.

"Do you love me, Miss Graham?"

She hesitated a moment, but at last answered, —

"Yes, Colonel Greathouse, I love you."

"Better than you love anybody else?" he continued, still looking her in the eye.

"Ought you to put that question to me?" she asked. "Is it fair, under the circumstances? If I consent to become your wife and promise to love you, to honor and obey you so long as I shall live, can you ask more?"

"Yes," he answered, "I have the right to know all that is in the heart of the woman who is to become my wife. If she loves or has ever loved another, it is my right to know that fact."

She hesitated for a time, and then spoke.

"I have loved another gentleman," she said, "and very dearly. But it began before I ever saw or heard of you, and I have never told the gentleman of my love. I may never have the opportunity to confess it to him, even if you should reject the hand that now is yours by a solemn pledge."

"Does that gentleman love you?" he asked with the sternness of an inquisitor.

"He did once," she said, "and asked my love in return. But I refused him, and he may have ceased to love the lady who rejected him for another. Men do not readily forgive such a slight put upon them. It would not be strange even if his love was now changed to hatred."

Greathouse made no comment upon this suggestion.

"The man for whom you rejected him was the one you told me of last week, was it not? I mean the man whom you promised to marry when he should produce your father."

"It was the same, Colonel Greathouse."

"You are free now from that pledge, I believe?"

"Quite free, sir, or I could not accept you."

He sat for some time in silence, during which neither spoke.

"Helen," said he at last, and addressing her for the first time in her life by her Christian name, "tell me, if it were in your power to choose between that gentleman, whom you say you loved, and myself, uncontrolled by any pledge or obligation, which would you accept for your husband?"

Helen burst into tears.

"It is impossible for me to choose," she answered. "I am ready and willing to become your wife, Colonel Greathouse, if you wish me to do so. I am sure I shall do my duty in that



character. But you ought not to ask me such questions. I have but one wish and that is to do that which my duty requires me to do."

Greathouse heard patiently, but paid no heed to what she said. He continued, but in a kinder tone, —

"Could you be happy with that gentleman?"

Helen made no reply but sat in her chair and sobbed. She felt that he was wantonly trifling with recollections that she would gladly have buried with the dead past. What right had she to think of happiness, when she had turned her back upon it at a time which seemed to her so many years ago? The very idea of happiness had long seemed an unlawful one. It was treason to the rights of the living and to the sacred memory of the dead.

"Could you be happy?" continued Greathouse, at last, in a still softer tone, finding that no answer came from the lady.

"I do not think of happiness, Colonel Greathouse. I have been taught that duty is to be considered before all things; and it has appeared for a long time past that, in my case, duty and happiness had parted company. I shall try to be as happy as I can, and at the same time do my duty, in whatever station God may place me."

"Who is the gentleman, Helen, who offered you his love and was rejected?"

"It is not my secret, Colonel Greathouse; I have no right to disclose the secrets of another."

"Was it Mr. Stacey?" he continued, without noticing her answer.

Helen made no reply.

"Was it Mr. Henry Stacey, Helen?"

This he said with a manner that expressed so much kindness that she could not refuse an answer, but bowed an affirmative and continued her sobs.

"Helen," said Greathouse, "I wish to ask of you a favor. I am going away, and may not have an opportunity of asking another."

She regarded him inquiringly and waited for him to proceed.

"This evening Mr. Stacey will call here. I shall myself ask him to call, saying that you have a word for his ear; but I shall give him no other explanation. When he comes, I wish you to say to him what you have said to me. Tell him that I had the promise of your hand but that I occupied only a secondary place in your heart. That I have yielded up my right to him

should he choose to accept it. If he refuses you, Helen, then I will come and claim my bride. Should he do so he will return to me to-morrow and tell me what he has done. But if, on the other hand, his love still burns brightly, then I shall not see you again for years, perhaps never. I shall, therefore, take leave of you now."

"Why do you leave me?" cried Helen. "Not in anger or in disappointment, I trust. After so generous a deed, surely you do not feel that I could consent to your going away so suddenly."

"No, Miss Graham," he said, "I have already remained here longer than was right for me to remain. I, too, have a duty to perform, and am trying to do it as well as I can. I have seldom done my duty in this life. Sometimes I allow myself the luxury, and now I feel in the humor to do so once more. It was my duty to serve you when you were in great trouble, as you were a short time since; and it was my duty as a gentleman to do it without your making the promise which, in your zeal in your father's cause, you made. Believe me, Miss Graham, I should have done all that I did had you not mentioned the subject of marriage. Having brought you through your difficulties, having added something to your happiness, it was my duty not to make you miserable by exacting compliance with a pledge forced from you by the desperate straits to which, by the wickedness of others, you had been brought. Had I insisted on your performing that promise, my conduct would have been similar to that of the coast-marauder who robs and murders shipwrecked mariners as they faintly struggle up from the angry waves that have barely failed to destroy them. It would have been like that of the receiver of stolen goods, who demands the lion's share of the booty for his trifling risk. Bloodstone had siezed the pearl and was bearing it triumphantly away, when the hue and cry came so sharply after him that he was forced to let fall the plunder and save himself. You became a waif—goods abandoned by this robber in his flight. Was it for Robert Greathouse to plunder the felon, to filch from the thief, under pretence of bringing him to justice? The wrecker who saves a cargo is entitled to compensation; but it must be a reasonable one and cannot extend to all the goods rescued. He cannot become more remorseless than the angry ocean from which the mariner has escaped. I will accept a reasonable compensation, Miss Graham. I have rescued you from Bloodstone, into whose hands you had fallen.

The treasure saved cannot be divided and I am not entitled to all. I will accept my portion in the pleasure it will be to me to see you happy in the love of the man who already possesses your heart. You said that you knew me, Helen ; but the offer you made to induce me to serve you was not a compliment to me. I would have been indeed a wretch had I taken advantage of your misfortune to gain so precious a prize as your hand in marriage."

"Forgive me, Colonel Greathouse, I did not think of that. I only thought of your bravery and the reward that I thought it deserved. I felt that if you saved me from destruction—from a fate worse than death, that all I possessed was justly yours. I did not think of what you would do with me when I came to be your own to dispose of. I should not have thought you ungenerous had you exacted that which I felt to be your due. Your conduct in releasing me to go with my heart is only an additional proof of a greatness of soul that I already knew you to possess."

"I thank you, Helen, for your good opinion. It is alone a sufficient reward for all I have done. I shall leave this Territory, taking a precious treasure in the esteem of the lady I love."

"Whither do you go, Colonel Greathouse?"

"I go to join my people, as I told you some time since I felt it my duty to do. I know, Helen, that you will think that I fight for the bad cause against the good ; that I take up the side of the lordly master against the suffering slave ; that I draw my sword in the battle of darkness and superstition, and against education, and freedom, and progress."

"No, Colonel," cried Helen, "do not think that I blame you for anything. To me you are good, noble and generous, and will always be so."

"But," he continued, without heeding her, "all of this may be true ; I have not reasoned about it ; I do not pretend to reduce my ideas to the rules of logic. I follow my affections wherever they may lead me. I only know that my people, my kindred, have sent forth a wail of anguish that has reached me. I cannot remain deaf to the appeal. I cannot shut out the calls of the friends of my youth for me to come and help them in the time of their sore peril, and I must go. If they are in error, I will share in the mistake. If they are wicked, I will go and be wicked with them. I would rather be wrong with my friends, than right with my enemies. And in the North, Miss Graham, I am amongst enemies. I am surrounded by

people with whom I have no sympathy. I know that my life has not been such a life as perhaps entitles me to the sympathy of people so different from me as are those who now surround me ; but such as it has been, at least I cannot be expected to apologize for it. Some will say, that what I am, that have I been made by the very system of slavery, in behalf of which I go away to fight, perhaps to die. All of that may be true. But I do not go to fight for slavery ; I go to fight with my friends and kindred, and against those with whom they are at war. What they suffer, that will I suffer. If they lose, I will lose with them, and if they triumph, I will be there to rejoice with my people's joy. This to me is a matter of duty, perhaps a mistaken one, but, in a lifetime of mistakes, one more or less can make no great difference."

"When do you leave, Colonel Greathouse ?"

"To-morrow afternoon," he answered. "Before that time Helen, you will be happy in the love and confidence of the man to whom you have given your heart. I, too, shall be happy in the consciousness of having, for at least once in my life, done my duty, by giving you up to the object of your choice ; for this time, I am sure, there has been no mistake. When the war is over, Helen," he said, rising to take his leave, "I hope to meet you again ; if I do not, it will be because I shall have perished in that struggle, into which my heart and not my reason has drawn me. Remember my request, when Mr. Stacey comes this evening," he said ; and taking her hand, he raised it once more to his lips and withdrew.

Helen remained by the window in deep meditation, until her father and Blanche returned. They had been placing flowers on the grave of the departed one, and the effect of the sad employment still sat heavily upon them.

After dinner, Harry Stacey came in. It was an unusual circumstance now for him to more than look in upon the family in a casual way ; but this time he sat down, and appeared to have come to spend the evening.

Helen understood perfectly well what his business was ; but the others only thanked him for a friendly visit.

Mr. Graham, as was his custom now, retired early, and left the two young ladies to entertain the visitor.

For a time they sat together and conversed upon general subjects, but soon Blanche, with a true woman's tact, contrived to slip out of the room upon some pretence that kept her

busily going back and forth from time to time, between the parlor and Helen's sleeping room, as long as Harry stayed.

Helen felt deeply the charge put upon her by Greathouse, and scarcely knew how to go about it. How could she broach such a subject to a young gentleman as he had exacted a promise from her to do?

But Harry relieved her from the task. He knew Helen too well to believe that, with her principles, she would send for him now for any purpose save that of giving him to understand that her situation had changed, and that now he might hope to win her love. So that, directly that Blanche left the room, he boldly asked her if the summons she had sent him was in any manner connected with the affair that lay so near his heart?

Helen blushed, but the answer came freely from her lips.

"Yes, Mr. Stacey," she said, "it is."

"You make me very happy," he cried, "for my heart remains the same as when I laid it at your feet before. I am only too glad to again ask your love. My position has not been changed, nor have my sentiments towards you, Miss Graham. I am still in the employment of your father, and love you more than ever. To-day Colonel Greathouse came to see me, and, after conversing with me for a time, told me that he had just come from making a parting call upon you, before going away out of the country. I expressed my sorrow that he had determined to leave us, but he said that the resolution was irrevocable. Having shaken hands with me, he was about to leave, when he suddenly remembered that he had a message from you to me. He said that Miss Graham had requested him to ask me to call and see her, and spend the evening at No. 16. I thanked him, and promised to do so, and he went his way. I cannot tell you, Helen, how much pleasure the message gave me. It was the light that suddenly bursts upon the gaze of the wanderer in a wilderness. I knew you too well to doubt that it conveyed much more than the words expressed. I felt that it meant all that I could wish you to say. Helen, am I right? Speak to me, and put my heart at rest."

"Yes, Harry," she answered, "you were entirely correct in your opinions as to my object in sending you the message. I feel that in this room, where my mother so often spoke of you, where perhaps her spirit now hovers over us, I may, better than elsewhere, tell you what is the truth, that I have loved

you a long, long time,—much longer than perhaps I ought to confess, for it may date back to a period more remote than your own love for me.”

“That is impossible,” cried Harry, “unless you loved me before you ever saw me, for my love commenced with the day I met you for the first time.”

The rhapsodies of a lover are seldom interesting to any save the object of his passion. For an hour the two exchanged vows and related the history of their affection during the year of trial that each had undergone since their first meeting in San Francisco.

When Blanche returned to the room to resume her seat, she knew by the manner of the two that something unusual had occurred; but she had never been the confidant of Helen in the matter of her love for Harry, and of late the young gentleman had communicated nothing to her.

The secret of the engagement with Bloodstone had been faithfully kept by him, so that no one knew of it save the parties immediately interested. Blanche had never had even a suspicion of the strange affair. This evening she felt, however, quite sure that the question of love had been discussed between the young couple.

After Harry had gone, and the young ladies had retired to bed, she taxed Helen with having received a proposal from the young lawyer. Helen had now no reason for concealing her love, and so confessed the fact to her friend. She was full of joy at the new life that was dawning upon her. There was but one pang to impair the bliss that had taken possession of her soul. It was the reflection that her darling mother had died without knowing of the love of the two for each other. “Could she have known all,” sighed poor Helen, “I am sure that her heart would have been spared at least one sorrow that made her burden so hard to bear.”

## CHAPTER XLVII.

## JACK GOWDY HANDS IN HIS CHECKS.

THE secret of the rescue of Mr. Graham was well kept. Greathouse charged his friends Gowdy and Bowers to remember that they were gentlemen, and that their word had been pledged not to divulge what had occurred. "We have kept faith with them, and by doing it obtained all we asked. Let us not go back upon our promises." They only answered that no more elegant gentlemen than themselves ever walked on top of the earth, and that gentlemen never lied.

Jack, however, was so proud of the exploit they had performed, that he would not resume his place upon the box till it was properly celebrated, at least, by a fitting carouse. Indeed, he would not commence driving the coach again, while his money lasted, even if the stage company had wished it. But they did not wish it. They, the very next day after the exploit, issued orders for Jack's discharge from his employment. Fifteen horses had been killed outright in the drunken freak of running away with the coach,—for so it was thought to have been,—besides a still greater number seriously injured.

"Jack was," so the president of the stage company said, "a faithful man, and a good driver, as long as he kept sober; but when drunk, he was fearfully reckless,—he must be discharged."

Yet it is only just to Jack to record that he was not discharged. Jack Gowdy had never been discharged in his life, so he said, from any employment. He always discharged himself, when he was guilty of any such misdemeanor as the one that had just occurred. His habit was to stay from the office till he was sent for to come and resume his duties. If he never received this command, then he assumed that he had left the company's service of his own accord.

The morning after the arrival of Greathouse and his friends, the stage company's agent learned that a coach and six horses

had been left, during the night, in an open yard near the Graham mine. This proved to be Gowdy's coach, who, as the agent had already learned by telegraph, had, in a drunken frolic, run away from Folsom with a coach and three passengers. The horses were sent to the stable, and the coach brought to the yard. As for the driver, it was said that he had been seen in company with an ox-teamster, named Joe Bowers, going about the town still in a state of intoxication. Upon consulting the chief officer at Sacramento by telegraph, directions came not to employ the delinquent again. This last outbreak was altogether of too serious a nature to be passed over. It was not necessary to communicate this decision to Gowdy, at least until he should call and ask to be allowed to resume his place. And this, it was known, he would scarcely do without an intimation in advance that his services were desired.

The five hundred dollars that had been so carefully preserved for the benefit of Miss Graham were now no longer needed in that quarter. So the sum was drawn from the bank, and the two friends, Jack and Joe, made the gambling saloons and dead-falls of Virginia ring with the sound of their revelry. Everybody was obliged to drink, and anybody that chose could borrow a stake to go against faro, while the sum lasted. But that was not long. Jack's course was like that of a splendid sky-rocket. He blazed while he mounted. When it was all gone, the two friends held a council of war.

"We are coming down to a white-check game," said the stage driver to his friend who drove oxen for a livelihood. "This won't do. We must not forget that we are gentlemen, and as good as ever walked on top of ground. We can't hang around a Washoe dead-fall, like a pair of sneaking blue-bellied Yankees from New York, betting half dollars on case cards. If we can't go against it with red checks, as becomes gentlemen, we will just pass out and quit. That is my hand, Joe. What do you say?"

That was also Joe's hand, said that gentleman, and so they passed out.

"Your oxen must have filled their bellies full of Carson Valley sage bushes and grease-wood by this time, and are ready to go to work again. Don't you think so, Joe?"

"Yes, Jack, they have been grazing long enough to get fat, if the Indians have let them alone."

"Well, Joe, go down and look after your cattle. I will see what I can find to do. We must have some money, somehow.



A gentleman in this country without money don't amount to much. He is like a sardine amongst a lot of sharks. He is no better than a Yankee school-master, and not half as good as a free nigger. It will never do for two gentlemen to come down to any such a grade as that, Joe."

This, also, was the ox-driver's opinion. So they separated. Jack went in pursuit of employment in the line of what he called his legitimate profession. But he did not find the matter an easy one. He had only been a week in spending his money, and the news of his last escapade was still fresh in the town. His old place had been filled by another driver, and the California lines did not dare to trust so wild a fellow with their horses. After running about the streets all day, he at last agreed with the overland company to drive for them. These coaches formed a line that traversed the great wilderness of two thousand miles in breadth that separated California from the Valley of the Mississippi. The land was inhabited with roving tribes of savages. Careful drivers could not be found to go upon so perilous a route. They were not looked for. A great government subvention was paid for carrying the mails. And so the coaches must go every day in spite of the Indians. Anybody who could be found sufficiently desperate to sit upon the box, and who cared little enough for his life to take the risk, could always find employment to drive an overland coach.

"It is a hard life," muttered Jack, "but I must do something. I am a gentleman, and not a lunch-eating bummer, and so I must earn a livelihood in a gentlemanly way. I will take this place," he reasoned to himself, "for a little while, till they forget about my last scrape. Then I will come back to society and civilization once more."

But before starting away he went to see Helen Graham. He had not been near the hotel since the affair of the rescue. Indeed, he had not been in condition to go.

"A gentleman," said he to Joe Bowers, one day when they were speaking of the Graham family, "can't call upon a lady except when he is at his best. Sometimes his best is nothing to brag of. But anyhow, he can never appear too well when he enters the presence of a lady. When I get sober, Joe, I will put myself in presentable condition, and make one call, just to thank that beautiful young lady for all the favors she has done for me. And, Joe, I can never be grateful enough to her for the kindness she has shown to me. Indeed I can't. It is perfectly impossible."

So Jack, the first day that he was sober, which was the day his money gave out, dressed himself as smartly as possible, and called at No. 16 to tell Helen that he was going away, and to thank her for her unfailing kindness to the stage-driver. He was the one who had received the favors, in his opinion. The idea that he had conferred a benefit never entered his mind. What he had done it was his duty to do, being a gentleman. Her sweet smiles and pleasant greetings to him had been works of genuine kindness, only to be repaid by a life-time of gratitude to the beautiful lady. The hall door was wide open when he arrived, and, looking in, he found all the other doors also open, and the windows raised up to let in the air. The beds were lying scattered about the floor in confusion, and the chairs were tumbled about upon their backs, while two stout chamber-maids, with brooms in their hands, talking and laughing loudly, were sending the dust and feathers in great clouds about the place.

"Where is Miss Graham?" demanded Jack, with a sinking sensation in his breast.

"All gone, sir," was the loud and prompt answer of the boisterous maids. "Left this morning at daylight. Gone over the mountains, sir."

Jack turned and went sorrowfully down the stairs.

"I only wanted to tell her how kind she had been to me," he said, with a tear dimming the corner of his eye, "and how much happiness I have had in being able to speak to her once in a while. So much for getting drunk," said he. "I might have known that she would not stay in this miserable, God-forsaken place, after her father came back to her. I ought to have come sooner, and can only blame myself. But I could have gone amongst the red-skins with a better heart, if I could have taken with me one more smile from that beautiful lady."

But it was too late, and the stage-driver mounted his box and turned his face sadly towards the wilderness. It was, indeed, a hard country to which Jack had been driven by an adverse fortune. An area of unproductive territory, stretching over hundreds of miles, with scarcely a bush to break the everlasting monotony of dreariness. Over this, at will, wandered hordes of savages, ready at all times to boldly give battle, or to lay in ambush and stealthily crawl upon the wayfarer and murder him outright, or capture and put to death by lingering torture, as the relative strength of the parties would seem to render the most desirable to their bloodthirsty natures. At con-

venient intervals of twenty miles were fortified stations, where the horses were kept guarded by a small band of armed men. Between those little strongholds the stage driver pursued his perilous course, defending himself as best he could.

Jack resolved from the first to remain in this employment the shortest time that would suffice to cause his last exploit in Washoe to be forgotten, and then to return. So he took the best care of himself. He chewed such tobacco as came in his way, though sighing for the beautiful "fine-cut" that only residents within civilized districts could command and obtain. But whiskey he studiously abstained from.

"Not now, boys," he said, when invited to drink the "tangle-leg," as it was called, of the road, "no whiskey for Jack, while he lives in this abominable place."

Two months passed drearily away in this manner, and Jack began to count the days when he would turn his face again westward, to the fair fields and green woods of California. One month longer would, he was sure, expiate for all the harm he had done in running away with the coach. "As good a driver as I am can find employment somewhere. I will make the effort in a month."

One day, about this time, Jack was waiting for the western bound coach to come to his most easterly station. He was to take the place of the other driver who stopped there, and returned again east. When the coach drove up to the door, Jack observed that it was not empty, as was generally the case just at that time. Of late, the road had been made especially dangerous by the encroachments of the Apaches. This savage tribe had come north, from the borders of Mexico, and committed a great many murders upon the emigrants passing over the country, and the stages, for the time, were usually without passengers. But even now, the company that Jack was to have did not promise to add much to his personal security on the road. It was a most helpless little band of travellers that had come to Jack to be escorted on the journey. The most effective one of the company of four souls, proved to be a woman of five-and-twenty years of age. The others were her three children, two girls and a boy, this latter an infant in arms. The eldest, a girl of six years, had a profusion of light curls falling over her shoulders, and with bright blue eyes that went to Jack's heart at a glance. The mother had journeyed over the dreary road for hundreds of miles, on her way to join her husband in the mines of the extreme west. So, from sta-

tion to station, each stage-driver handing her and her little ones over with a word of hearty commendation to the next, she had toiled on her journey, her very helplessness proving her chief protection. The mother had long since learned to depend with unerring certainty upon the rough courtesy of the stage-driver for all needful assistance and protection that man could render her. Whenever overwhelming force should come, she knew that she was in the hands of God, and must abide his decrees. So she said little to Jack, her experience telling her that all that he could do to aid her would be done when necessary, without any special application on her part. But the blue-eyed daughter was more communicative. She, perhaps, felt but lightly the dangers that beset their path; and the time rested heavily upon her young nature. At all events, she and the driver were soon great friends. This led to an acquaintance with the mother, so that before the day was far advanced Jack had learned the history of the whole family, — from whence they had come and whither they were going.

At each station, while the horses were being changed, he handed them politely out of the coach, and with his own hand fetched them food and refreshments, generally from his own stores and at his own expense. The little blue-eyed beauty, whom he had already attached to himself as a warm friend for life, so they said and agreed, always descended from the coach when he did, and went with him about the station with the familiar confidence of a friendship of years standing. In the afternoon their road lay through a dangerous pass. One of those narrow defiles, so common upon the great American plains, where the mountains coming close together, the narrow gorge is filled up with great rocks, that in ages gone by have been detached from their resting-places far up towards the summit, and have rolled down, to pile up in mighty confusion at the point of meeting half way between the two. If any Indians should by chance infest the road, that would be their choice spot for an ambuscade. This Jack knew full well. And, out of care for the mother and children, made special inquiry at the last station before reaching it, as to the prudence of the woman and her family going on that night. As for the coach, it bore the mails, and must go on, no matter what stood in the way to deter the adventure. The answer was, that there was no reason to fear exceptional danger. The day was as propitious a time as any to go through the pass. Jack told the mother of the perils that might come upon them. But the woman had already passed

over hundreds of miles of danger, and through scores of similar passes, and continued immunity had rendered her confident. She was going to join her husband, and was in the hands of divine Providence. It had protected, so far, in safety; it would not, she was sure, let her at this late period perish by the wayside. Besides, she had found Jack especially kind and considerate amongst all the kind-hearted frontiersmen with whom she had met. She would not leave him, but would go on if he went. We have already said that Jack must go on. So when the horses were put in, he examined his six-shooters carefully, and finding them all right, handed in his passengers. When he came to his blue-eyed favorite, he lifted her up, and took a kiss, and then placed her snugly in the seat by her mother's side. "Be a little soldier," he said, stroking her curls, "and don't let your mother get frightened at anything. If you hear the redskins you must all squat down in the bottom of the coach, and wait till I tell you, before doing anything else." This said, the wild mustangs had the lash cracked over their heads, and they plunged out into the sea of sage brush that covers the great plains. Soon they left the level country and entered the hills. For two hours they rattled gaily along through the deep mountain gorge that Jack feared to be so dangerous, whirling in and out amongst the huge rocks, that, like towers and castle walls, hemmed in the narrow road upon all sides. But their progress, thus far, was made with safety. He had scanned carefully each rock, and each tree, as he drove up to it, fearing to see a savage spring out on his path with the Apache's war-whoop, boding torture and death to all. But the rocks were still innocent of ambuscade, or evil purpose, and now he had journeyed almost beyond the dangerous path, and was rapidly drawing towards the level country. The gorge opened out wider and wider; the piles of rock receded from the road to the right and to the left, and the flat line of sage brush again came into view in the distance. Jack drew a long breath of relief. "I was more frightened than hurt that time," he thought. "I must be getting a little cowardly in my old age." But he had congratulated himself too soon. The danger was not past, for at this moment a horrid yell arose from the rocks and trees in advance of his route on each side, and was echoed in fearful tones from hill to hill across the road he was about to pass. It was the war-whoop of the Apaches, a sound that Jack had heard many times before on the Gila, and he knew well what it signified. It was death, in its most horrid and revolting form, by fire, and torture to all

who fell into the hands of the savages. The Indians were in ambush on either side of the road, and in irresistible force. He could see their heads looking over the rocks on each side, and he knew full well that the number in concealment was even greater than those who showed themselves. There was but one certain means of escape open to the driver, and that only provided for his own safety, to the sacrifice of the passengers inside the coach. It was the custom of the road, when an overland coach was attacked by an overwhelming force of Indians, for the driver to spring from his place on the box, and with his knife detach a horse from the team, and, mounting him, escape. This rule was so firmly established, that men were employed to drive with the understanding that this was their privilege, as it was generally their only hope of escaping a certain and cruel death. It was the driver's plank in a shipwreck. Without this rule men could not have been induced to accept the employment. Passengers also availed themselves sometimes of the same means of escape. There was generally a horse for each passenger upon so dangerous a road. When they chose, they, of course, could make the experiment as well as the driver. When the attacking party, however, was small, it was often better policy for all to stand and defend their lives upon the spot by a battle. In such case, the driver was naturally the commander-in-chief of the defending party. Such resistance was often made with success against fearful odds. But when the Indians, as sometimes occurred, came in overwhelming numbers, the escape by mounting one of the horses was the only plan that possessed the remotest chance of success. This plan was now open to Jack Gowdy. Had he been alone, or had his passengers been all grown-up men, able to defend themselves, he would, in less time than it has taken us to relate the situation, have been mounted upon the fleetest horse in his team, and flying back on the return road, or over the hills in safety. But the recollection of the little blue-eyed girl, whose kiss was yet warm upon his lips, held him chained to the spot. "Who is to bring away that woman and her children, if I run away and leave her?" he thought to himself, as the idea of escape entered his mind. "What sort of a show would those children have in riding a stage-horse bare-backed over these hills?" The driver's resolution was formed in an instant. "Jack Gowdy is a gentleman," he muttered to himself, as he laid his whip upon the frightened horses, and sent them springing madly forward on the road straight through the hostile ambuscade; "and he

never yet went back, when a woman and children were in trouble and needed a gentleman to stand by them. And if he has never done it up to this time, he will not commence now. He braced himself firmly in his seat, tightened up his reins and plied his whip. He saw that the road was clear of obstructions. The savages were posted behind the rocks through which he had to pass. But they kept out of the road from fear that the coach might, as it sometimes did prove to be, filled with armed soldiers. They took their chances on being able to shoot from their concealment, the driver, as he sat on the box, and then doing the same to the passengers, as they should come out of the coach afterwards. They had not been upon the spot long enough to obstruct the road by a barricade, as they otherwise would have done. Jack saw the chance of putting through with his charge, and he resolved to try it. The horses responded gallantly to the call made upon them, and flew along the open road with the speed of the wind. As Jack dashed along through the terrible pass, he returned the Apaches their own yell of defiance. He could give it as clear and as shrill as it was ever shouted by Apache brave over the writhing body of a roasting emigrant. Bang! Bang! Bang! came the rattle of the arms, and a blaze of fire burst forth from behind the rocks, and pattered like hail down upon the passing stage-coach. But firm as a rock, Jack Gowdy sat up in his place, and when he dashed through the army of savages, and out of the range of their guns, a fierce howl of disappointed rage and hatred floated on the wind in pursuit of the flying coach.

"Turn out! Turn out! Jack Gowdy is in trouble," shouted the man on watch at the next station, not a mile from the scene of attack. Then there was a rush for arms and a closing of doors at the little fortress, for they could already see the team that was dashing furiously over the plains in the direction of the block-house.

"I don't think anybody is hurt," said the sentinel, looking down the road at the coming coach; "I can see Gowdy in his place, looking as cool as a cucumber in an ice-box. Old Jack Gowdy don't ask any odds of the Apaches, if they will just give him a square deal," was the admiring comment made in reply to the sentinel. "Jack Gowdy is no dung-hill chicken, he is not, you can bet your life."

At the rate the coach came, there was but little time for further remarks. Gowdy, true enough, sat erect in his place, holding firmly the lines, while the horses dashed up to the door

of the station and stopped, as was their habit. They heard the brave driver's voice, but they heard it only once. It was clear and ringing, but it suddenly ceased.

"The damned red-skins have killed me," he shouted. "But they did not get that woman and her blue-eyed babies, this trip, by God."

Then there was a heavy fall; and the driver was seen stretched in the road, in front of the coach wheels. They picked him up and bore him into the station. The little blue eyed girl followed her new friend inside, and looked in his face. For a minute, she thought she saw a smile of recognition dwell for a moment upon the weather-beaten visage of the stage-driver, and then all was fixed and vacant. They examined him in search for wounds. The bullets of the Apaches had plunged through his body in half a score of places. The rude skill of the backwoodsmen knew no balsam that could heal such injuries. All the science known to the sons of men could not have produced one single pulsation in the brave heart that was now stilled. The number of gentlemen in the world was reduced by one. Jack Gowdy was dead.

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## CHAPTER XLVIII.

### EXEUNT OMNES.

WHEN Mr. Graham and his daughter reached their old quarters at the Cosmodental Hotel, they found themselves at once surrounded by a host of sympathizing friends. The news of the immense strike in the fourth level of the mine had quite swallowed up that other marvel of nine days' standing, the temporary and disgraceful disappearance of the owner.

The first gentleman to meet Mr. Graham, and to seize his hand with an affectionate grasp, was Mr. Ebenezer Gudgeon. The whole Gudgeon family, father, mother, and interesting son, Vanderbilt, spent the evening in No. 42. They were so glad



to see their dear friends once more that they could not tear themselves away till long after midnight.

The next day Vanderbilt was early to call and late to go away. Blanche McIver was in ecstasies.

"There is still hope for me!" she cried. "I shall escape the odious wretch. He will propose to you, Baby, and then, if you have the humanity of an oyster, you will accept him for my sake."

In less than a week Helen confessed to Blanche that she saw no help for it.

"He seems determined to propose to me, do what I will to prevent it. I feel it coming every time he enters the parlor. I have sent him off a dozen times, first by changing the conversation, and later by other more violent measures, when that proved insufficient. But I feel there is no help for it but to have him propose, unless I tell him of my engagement. That I must do, I suppose, for I do not wish to be compelled to refuse him."

Poor Blanche pleaded hard for her friend to allow him to go on and make his offer to her and be refused. But that Helen could not consent to do.

"It would be wicked, Blanche," she said, "and I cannot do it."

At last her course was agreed upon, that at his next visit Vanderbilt should be put out of his misery.

"I have a secret to tell you, Mr. Gudgeon," she said, the next time that gentleman made his appearance at No. 42, "something that I confide to you as a friend, but which is to go no further."

"What is it?" he asked. "You may depend upon my discretion."

"I have become engaged to be married, Mr. Gudgeon."

"To whom, Miss Graham?" he demanded fiercely, already bursting with indignation.

"That must remain a secret for some time longer," she replied, "but I will tell you as soon as I may tell any one."

Young Gudgeon immediately arose and hurried out of the room to return no more. In this he was followed by the whole Gudgeon family. All remained away for the future, greatly to the delight of Mr. Graham and his daughter.

But the secret of Helen's engagement only remained a secret till Vanderbilt reached the street. Then it came back to No. 42 in all sorts of shapes and disguises. She had promised her

hand, so it was said, to a famous gambler, called Bob Great-house, the murderer. Others had even good reason for thinking that she had engaged her hand to a drunken stage-driver in Washoe, whose name no one pretended to remember, or, indeed, ever to have heard. No one suspected the true state of the case.

Acting under the inspiration of Vanderbilt Gudgeon, the friend of the family, all vied in adding to the extravagant stories of the absurd manner in which the heart of the young beauty had been captured. She had kept open house, it was said, during her father's absence, and her visitors had been the most disreputable persons. Indeed, it was said that she had condescended to meet and be civil to people altogether beneath her. People who were not worth ten thousand dollars in the world had been received by her upon terms of social equality.

Another set, however, either from motives of gallantry to the sex when hardly used, or perhaps from a love of being in opposition, took up the cudgel for the young lady, and made a handsome fight for her. They denied the disreputable insinuation that Miss Graham had associated with low people without wealth or social position, and declared the charge to be wholly groundless. They even went so far as boldly to challenge the maligners to the proof.

It would be found, so they said, that no person had ever entered Miss Graham's apartments at Washoe who was not in possession of at least a respectable property, either in shares or money. As for her engagement, it was, they declared, a most creditable one. Her intended husband was one of the wealthiest gentlemen in the country, being no other than Mr. Enoch Bloodstone, the well-known man of fortune.

While San Francisco high life was occupying itself with conjectures and disturbing rumors concerning the now wealthy and respectable Grahams, Henry Stacey was chiefly engaged in Washoe Territory settling up the affairs of his client, who had resolved not again to return to a place so associated with sad and distressing recollections. Mr. Graham could not forgive himself for his own course in pursuing the search for the silver vein, as he did, to the oblivion of all other considerations.

"I am not innocent of Matilda's death," was his constant reproach to himself. "I sold her for gold."

Nothing could dissuade him from this notion.

"At least," he declared, "I will not accept the purchase money."

The nearest that he would come to a deviation from this resolution was to give the mine to his children.

"You were thrown into the monstrous bargain, Helen," he said. "You were bartered away once for the miserable dross, and at least ought not to be deprived of your share of the profits."

Had it not been for Helen's rights, he declared that he would have fled from the Territory, leaving the mine again to the first occupant. And this resolution he held inflexibly to the day of his death, three years afterward. He would never accept of any property, favor, or advantage that could, in any manner, be traced to the profits of the mine. To Helen he said, —

"Your hands are clean ; the treasure is purified before it reaches you. It comes as the price of your own, not another's suffering, so take and enjoy it as much as you may, for you have earned it and a thousand-fold more than it can bring."

Henry Stacey, in pursuance of Mr. Graham's instructions, made no effort to work the mine, but proceeded at once to sell it for the benefit of the daughter. A joint stock company was formed, and in three months the whole property had been sold for five millions of dollars, a sum which the new owners were able to take from the mine within the first year of their operations.

Harry was, however, required with the money to provide for all just charges that ought to come out of the property. This he faithfully did. His first effort was directed to the discovery of the three men who had rescued Mr. Graham from the hands of the wicked conspirators.

He soon heard of the sad death of Jack Gowdy, as well as of the departure of Greathouse for the South to join the army of the Rebellion. Joe Bowers, however, he soon found, and insisted upon his accepting such a reward as should place him in the position of a wealthy man for life. Joe returned to his old home in Missouri, and afterwards married a younger sister of the lady who had forgotten her engagement to him in her love for the butcher. The sister was even handsomer, so Joe thought, than Eliza, in her best days.

"There are as good fish in the sea as have ever been caught," was Joe's remark to a friend who referred to his old love.

He has now a fine farm on the banks of Calumet Creek, his old home.

Charley Hunter, the youth who had proved so faithful a companion to Helen in her trouble, and who, at the risk of his life, had gone in search of Greathouse to come to her rescue, was not forgotten. He was enabled to return to his mother at the East, with a fortune quite sufficient to put them all in easy circumstances, where he now resides. The stage company were one day surprised by an anonymous donation of ten thousand dollars, which amply repaid the shareholders for the loss of stock, consequent upon Jack Gowdy's runaway freak. Before leaving California, Harry Stacey and Helen Graham were married. Blanche McIver stood as bridesmaid for the young lady. It would have been only natural, under the circumstances, for Vanderbilt Gudgeon to have accompanied Blanche in the character of best man for Harry. But that gentleman declined to do so. He had not time to get ready, but requested, as was his custom, that his friend Mr. Bowles, should perform that service. So the faithful Bowles, for the hundredth, perhaps for the thousandth time, took Vanderbilt's place by the side of his fiancée to relieve that gentleman from an unpleasant duty. The ceremony was performed by the Protestant Episcopal Bishop of California. That most handsome of all the prelates in the world, as was admitted by all present, had never come out so stunning as on this occasion. It was remarked that his hands had never looked so white, or been waved so gracefully against the beautiful lawn back-ground as now, and his voice was, so ladies said, altogether heavenly. And when it was over, he remarked, in the hearing of all his intimate friends, that he had never united in marriage so handsome a couple as upon this present most happy occasion. We need, we presume, go no further in the description of the beautiful affair. The wedding took place upon the morning of the sailing of the steamer for the East. At one o'clock of the same day, the young married couple, with Mr. Graham, were sailing away for their old home in Pennsylvania, where they all arrived safely, and where they may be seen at any day in the old Graham mansion in Chester county. There was a strong disposition on the part of Harry, to reside at Wilmington, in Delaware, because of its association, but the request of Mr. Graham, that the family should remain where for so many generations it had been planted, prevailed; and the young people yielded to the request. Very soon after the marriage of Harry and Helen, a second wedding

came off in the same church and before the same Right Reverend gentleman. Mr. Vanderbilt Gudgeon had at last, in despair of making a better market of himself, determined to accept the best that lay in his way, and to marry Blanche McIver.

"Her hundred thousand dollars were," he grumbled to his father, "better than nothing, and nothing else seemed likely to come to him."

Accordingly the day was fixed for a certain Thursday, at eight o'clock in the evening. Special cards were issued and sent out, inviting all respectable persons already retired from business, as well as all others known to possess clear and unincumbered taxable property above the value of one hundred thousand dollars, to attend and join in the festivities to be given on the happy occasion at the Cosmodental Hotel, where the parents of bridegroom and bride resided. The preparations were of the most elegant and tasteful character. But the time for the wedding had already elapsed, and the bride had not made her appearance. As the whole party had still to go from the hotel to the bishop's cathedral for the ceremony, the company became impatient. Inquiry became eager and pressing, until at last a messenger was sent up stairs to her father's rooms to learn the cause of the extraordinary delay. She had dressed herself half an hour before, so the report said, for the wedding, and had stepped out for a moment in company with a young gentleman, a friend of the family. They were expecting her back immediately. But while the messenger still remained, a boy came with a note from Blanche to her father. She had just been married, and was now on her way to San Jose upon a wedding tour. Her husband was the faithful Bowles. She had stepped away in advance of the company, and, finding the good-natured bishop in full canonicals, waiting for the wedding party, had been married on the spot; and was off to spend the honeymoon.

The breaking up and dispersing of the brilliant assemblage was in keeping with the disaster that had brought it about. Old Gudgeon countermanded the supper and champagne directly that the news of the runaway reached his ears. But he was sorry afterward that his economy had taken that direction. The editors and reporters, indignant at the unjust deprivation imposed upon them, went directly from the hotel to their printing offices, nor slept till they had put their wrath in type. So they scored him the next morning most unmercifully, and set the whole town laughing at him and his heir apparent.

We have now disposed of all our characters in whom the reader is likely to take any interest, save Robert Greathouse alone. The story of him must be short, for we have little to tell. He made his way successfully back to the land of his youth, and was welcomed by his old companions in arms. We heard once from him, and that shortly after his arrival in Texas. He had been again made a Colonel of Rangers, and was about to set upon an expedition against the Federal forces. Then there came the news of a desperate battle that had raged for a day and a night. When the sun again arose upon the ensanguined field, it was strewn with the now friendly soldiers of both sides, locked in death's embrace. No record was kept of the slain, but all lay rotting in confused heaps, awaiting the last trump that will call them to answer a roll upon which their names will be unerringly inscribed. But the commanding officer was not spoken of again during the war, and his deeds passed into oblivion. But, upon the banks of the Rio Grande del Norte, may be seen to-day a simple slab, with the short inscription, "Here lies Robert Greathouse, late Colonel of Texan Rangers, who fell in battle on this spot, October 17th, 186-, aged 29 years."

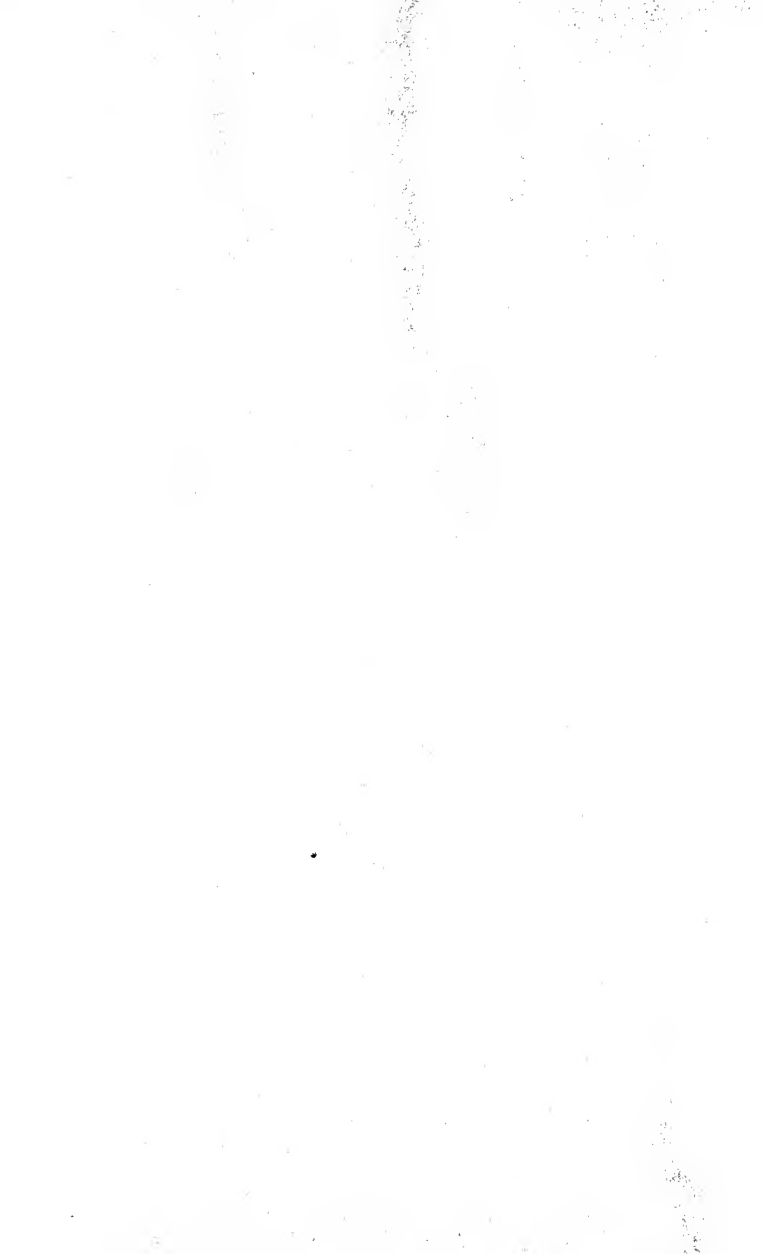
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